



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>



600071755V



THE THREE LOUISAS.

THE THREE LOUISAS.

A Novel.

BY

H. SUTHERLAND EDWARDS.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.



LONDON :

TINSLEY BROTHERS, 18, CATHERINE ST., STRAND.

1866.

[The Right of Translation is reserved.]

250. f. 249.

Digitized by Google

LONDON :
BRADBURY, EVANS, AND CO., PRINTERS, WHITEFRIARS.

CONTENTS.

CHAP.	PAGE
I.—DR. FLINGSBY	1
II.—A FAMILY DINNER	7
III.—ANOTHER CAB-TRICK	20
IV.—THE MORNING AFTER	28
V.—BRIGHTON	38
VI.—SIX HOURS AT THE SEA-SIDE	49
VII.—DISPUTATION	60
VIII.—MADAME VELLETRI	66
IX.—MEDITATION AND SUPPER	77
X.—A GAME AT CARDS	86
XI.—LOUISA AND HER MOTHER	111
XII.—FLINGSBY'S WATCH	120
XIII.—A FAMILY COUNCIL	129
XIV.—FLINGSBY, MOXOM, AND CO.	137
XV.—A FINANCIAL STATEMENT	144

CHAP.	PAGE
XVI.—PEARSON'S FIRST APPEARANCE ON ANY STAGE	157
XVII.—THE WHOLE DUTY OF AN OPERA-SINGER	170
XVIII.—A SUPPLIANT	177
XIX.—PINK AND WHITE	190
XX.—THE DEBUT	196
XXI.—OPINIONS OF THE PRESS	206
XXII.—LUIGIA MENOTTI	216
XXIII.—AT VIENNA	220
XXIV.—RE-APPEARANCE OF LUIGIA MENOTTI.	234
XXV.—A DINNER AT RICHMOND	248
XXVI.—TABLE-TALK	259
XXVII.—ACTION FOR LIBEL	276
XXVIII.—A DESPERATE RESOLUTION	284
XXIX.—FINALE	298

THE THREE LOUISAS.

CHAPTER I.

DR. FLINGSBY.

FLINGSBY called at Mrs. Maynard's early the following day, soon after the time at which Dr. Martin usually paid his visit. The subject of Brighton had been introduced, and Dr. Martin had urged the desirability of going there.

However, Mrs. Maynard thought it best not to go, and Louisa was of the same opinion. Miss Rodgers was strongly opposed to the idea of accepting an invitation from Flingsby, though she could not conceal from herself that both the mother and the daughter were greatly in need of a change of air.

"You will lose all your hair, Miss May-

nard, if you don't go to the sea-side," said Flingsby

Louisa laughed. Miss Rodgers gave a sour smile.

"Ah, you may laugh, Miss Maynard," continued Flingsby, "but, I can tell you, it is a very serious matter. You don't know what trouble I had to save it. It will all fall off if you remain in London, and I shall consider myself robbed—regularly plundered."

"There, Louisa, there's a reason for you," said the mamma, who was already vacillating.

"Fancy us all going to Brighton for the sake of my hair!" said Louisa.

"Well, then, to be precise, let us say for the sake of your health, Miss Maynard. You know what Dr. Martin told you,—you now want nothing but strengthening. Fresh air, sea-breezes, early rising, moderate exercise—Brighton is the place for all these things. These natural tonics are much better than the preparations in bottles that you will have to swallow all day long if you remain in London, and without doing

you much good after all. No: Come to Brighton! Come to Brighton! I shall say that all day long, until you ask what time the train starts."

"It would be a good thing for your health, Louisa, I think that," said Mrs. Maynard.

"There! Mrs. Maynard is already on my side!" exclaimed Flingsby. "Now, Miss Rodgers, give me your vote and interest, and we shall carry the day. Miss Maynard is only waiting to be persuaded. She cannot yield all at once."

"No, I have no opinion in the matter," said Miss Rodgers. "I shall say nothing."

"But you will do me the favour to join our party, Miss Rodgers, of course. Otherwise, you will spoil everything."

"No, thank you," answered Miss Rodgers, coldly.

"Oh, but you really must. This is not the season, but you will not mind that. There is to be an amateur performance there next week, which you would enjoy immensely."

"Thank you. I thought I had already ex-

plained to you that I did not care for theatrical representations."

"Then if you like yachting, there are yachts at Brighton."

"Yachting makes me sick."

"Like the chocolate," thought Flingsby. "Well, then," he said, "you shall have one of my horses to ride. I thought of taking them down with me, and I have one—the quietest creature in the world—that I am sure you would like."

"Thank you, I do not ride," said Miss Rodgers.

"I wish I could think of some more effective way of tempting you," said Flingsby, who really cared very little whether Miss Rodgers accepted his invitation or not, and on the whole preferred that she should decline it. He wished to conciliate her; but, on the other hand, if she refused to be conciliated, he would be only too delighted to have an opportunity of seeing Louisa day after day without being bored and restrained by her eternal presence, and with no one to interfere with him but the exceedingly complaisant mamma. "If you won't join me as an ally, Miss Rodgers,

may I at least count upon your neutrality?" he continued.

"Oh, Mrs. Maynard will do as she pleases," she answered. "It is not for me to decide."

"Well, Mrs. Maynard," said Flingsby, at last, "I will tell you what I will do. I will leave you now, and if you will allow me to ask you for some dinner, at whatever time you are going to dine I will come back. Then if you think you can manage to make this little trip, we can arrange to start to-morrow morning. That will be the best, will it not?"

"We will dine at whatever time will suit you," said Mrs. Maynard.

"No, tell me at what time you dined yesterday."

"Six o'clock," replied Miss Rodgers, promptly. She could not bear to see Mrs. Maynard put herself out for the sake of this horrid man.

"Then please expect me at six o'clock, will you, Mrs. Maynard?"

"Certainly, with a great deal of pleasure," responded Louisa's mamma.

"Good morning, Mrs. Maynard. Adieu, Miss Rodgers — *sans rancune*?" And he gave his hand to the old maid. "Good-by, Miss Maynard. I hope we have not tired you."

"The 'we' is good," thought Miss Rodgers, "when he alone has been chattering here for the last hour."

"You are looking much better to-day. If you would only have an atom of confidence in me, and take my advice, you would be well in a week."

"And deceived, heart-broken, utterly ruined, in a fortnight," thought Miss Rodgers.

CHAPTER II.

A FAMILY DINNER.

"I THINK we had better go," said Mrs. Maynard, when Flingsby had left the room.

"I think we had better not," said Louisa.

"I don't know what you had better do," said Miss Rodgers. "You are both of you very weak," she continued, "and the sea-air would do you good."

"I am getting quite strong again," replied Louisa.

"And I am not ill at all," answered Mrs. Maynard.

"Not ill? I should like to consult Dr. Martin on that point. If you don't take great care of yourself we shall have Louisa sitting up with you, as you insisted upon sitting up with Louisa,

and I don't know what will become of both of you."

"Dear mamma, you do look very ill indeed," said Louisa, going up to her and kissing her.

"I think we had better go."

"I certainly thought so, my love—not for my sake, but yours," said Mrs. Maynard.

"I wish you two could go alone, that's all," said Miss Rodgers.

"How can we do so when he has been so kind, and has pressed us so much to go with him?" asked Mrs. Maynard.

"I think it is a very odd thing to do."

"It would be still more odd if, after refusing his proposition, we were to go quietly down to Brighton by ourselves."

In the meanwhile, a simple dinner was prepared. Flingsby didn't much care what he had for dinner, provided it was properly cooked and decently served. Six o'clock arrived, and with it the expected guest.

"This is the first time, is it not," said Flingsby, when they had sat down to table, "that Miss

Maynard has gone through the regular formality of dining since her illness?" Of the accident, the cause of her illness, he took care never to speak.

"Yes," said Louisa, "this is the first time that I have dined in what may be called a serious manner. Hitherto I have been taking soups, jellies, mutton-chops, and all sorts of odds and ends at all sorts of times."

"Well," he remarked, "the return to dinner is a great thing. It indicates neither more nor less than the return to health. I congratulate you."

Louisa bowed, and thought at the time that Flingsby was not such an evil-disposed person, after all, as Miss Rodgers wished to make him out. He was straight-forward enough; he was certainly good-natured; and, as far as could be judged, he was sincere. He had a ridiculous manner, occasionally, of paying compliments, but he did that half in fun. There was something about him, nevertheless, that she did not like; but she could not tell what, and she asked

herself from time to time whether her prejudice against him was really well-founded. Now, once make this inquiry in respect to a prejudice, and, if it really be a prejudice and nothing more, it is on the point of disappearing.

As dinner went on, Flingsby did his utmost to make himself agreeable, and did it admirably, without the slightest apparent effort. He inspired himself with the situation. He found a number of pleasant things to say to Louisa without making love to her; and as she, for the first time, did not discourage his attentions, he redoubled them, but without giving them too serious a character.

This was the first time he had ever sat down to table with Louisa and her mother; and if it be true that "you never know a man till you have dined with him," Flingsby, seen fasting, had been viewed—at least by Louisa—in an entirely false light.

At dessert he had a great success. He made Miss Rodgers laugh. She had, to be sure, been persuaded to drink two or three glasses of cham-

pagne ; but this alone would not have excited her hilarity. She had a better opinion of Flingsby than she had ever entertained before, and thought for a moment that it might be worth while to try and convert him.

After dinner he was on the point of going too far. He felt that he had surpassed himself, and that he had at length, to some extent, inspired confidence. Presuming upon his success, and perhaps because there was a little malice in his composition, he went to the piano, and played the introductory bars of Louisa's "*Rappelle-toi.*"

"What is that you are playing?" exclaimed Louisa, her face covered with blushes.

"A little song I happened to meet with the other day," replied Flingsby. "Shall I go on with it? You see I know it by heart. It has made an impression upon me."

"Why, it's Louisa's '*Rappelle-toi!*'" cried Mrs. Maynard. "Where *did* you get it, Mr. Flingsby?"

"Ah, Miss Louisa!" said Flingsby, "you never told me that you composed songs. You

did not think *I* took enough interest in you, perhaps."

"Tell me, Mr. Flingsby," said Louisa, eagerly, "where did you get it?"

"I hope I have not displeased you by attempting to play it, Miss Louisa. I bought it at Wood & Wire's. It was the only copy left," said Flingsby, "and I was determined no one else should have it."

Louisa felt relieved. She thought that Flingsby had come across the song by accident. She little knew that he had gone to the publishers that very afternoon with the express object of finding out all he could about a little episode in her life which both she and her mother seemed to wish very much to keep dark.

Flingsby had found out nothing, except that certain songs composed by a Miss Louisa Maynard had been published by Messrs. Wood & Wire, and that they had a single copy of one of them left, which copy he forthwith purchased; but he intended to repeat his visit, when he hoped to make further and more important discoveries.

In the meanwhile, he quite understood that if he wished to remain in favour with Louisa—he was not yet very firmly settled—he had better keep clear of this subject altogether. He had had to put up with her resentment, her coldness, her indifference, and it was only during the last two or three hours that she had treated him with anything resembling even graciousness. He had never had to do with such a timid girl before, and he cursed his stupidity for having startled her just when he was beginning to accustom her to his advances.

To drive away all recollection of the “*Rappelle-toi*” incident Flingsby now played all sorts of things on the piano, ending with the air from “*Dinorah*” which Louisa had sung to Velletri, and which served as an easy and natural transition to the question of Louisa’s coming out on the stage.

“Yes, Turpin has brought out ‘*Dinorah*,’” he said. “He would not wait for you, as we advised him to do, and he has given the part to that little wretch, *Chanterelle*.”

"Why do you call her a little wretch?" asked Mrs. Maynard.

"Because she sings like a cat," replied Flingsby, "and because she has made me lose a bet. You remember, Miss Louisa, I made a bet with old Turpin that he would not engage her; and if you had been ready to sing he should not have engaged her either."

"It is very hard to be called a wretch for that," remarked Louisa.

"That is the advantage of being in a public position," said Miss Rodgers. "Any one has a right to say anything of you."

"Only try, Miss Maynard, and see what we shall say of *you*," answered Flingsby. "You will not be disappointed, I can assure you. Go and see Velletri again when you return from Brighton—I will take you to him any day you please—and if you are well enough, he will put you up in any part you like. It will only be a trial; but a trial is all you want."

"But is it settled that we are to go to Brighton?" asked Louisa.

"I did not know it was," replied Mrs. Maynard.

"I have telegraphed to the hotel to take rooms," said Flingsby. "I made sure that you would come. I shall be ashamed to look Dr. Martin in the face again if you don't, for he told me it was absolutely necessary you should go, and I assured him I would not let you rest until you did. You ought to go, if only for your daughter's sake, Mrs. Maynard, and Louisa ought to go for yours."

It was arranged that Flingsby should come for the mother and daughter the next afternoon. He was glad to find that Miss Rodgers was inexorable when he again proposed as a matter of form that she should accompany them. At the last moment she thought it would be better to go; and when she reflected that it would be impossible to do so, and that she *must* stay in London to give her daily lessons, she regretted exceedingly that she had not somehow arranged to take a holiday, and she began to imagine that all sorts of dreadful things would happen to Louisa if she once let her go out of her sight.

Flingsby had not spent such a quiet domestic evening for years. As a general rule he preferred a wilder style of entertainment. Now, however, he thought of Victor Hugo's lines in "Lucrèce Borgia":—

"Amis, vive l'orgie !
J'aime la folle nuit ;
Et la nappe rougie,
Et le vin et le bruit ;"

and said to himself, "What brutes men must be who could take pleasure in such things." He had no near relations, except his uncle and aunt, whom he seldom troubled with his company ; and the only quiet house at which he ever spent the evening was that of Mr. Moxom, the second partner in the firm, whose daughter Priscilla, when he was out of spirits and very hard up, he sometimes thought of marrying. To spend the evening, however, with Priscilla and Priscilla's papa, was like doing penance ; and it was only when he was in a penitential frame of mind, and felt that he had been doing something very wrong or very foolish, that he went near her at all.

Priscilla would have given her eyes (they had white eye-lashes) to have had a twentieth part of the agreeable things poured into her ear that Flingsby had now been addressing to Louisa, and which Louisa had scarcely paid any attention to.

Nevertheless, it is better to talk to a pretty girl than to be listened to by an ugly one; and if Flingsby succeeded from time to time in making a remark that interested or amused Louisa, that was enough for him. He watched her attentively to see that he was not boring her with his anecdotes, his illustrations, and his original remarks in the shape of paradoxes; and as she still gave signs of animation when tea was brought up, he went on talking until between ten and eleven o'clock, when he thought she must really be fatigued, and from simple good nature, and not to keep her any longer out of bed, said that he must go.

Louisa, however, asked him to stay a little longer; and, as she had never done such a thing before, he was only too glad to comply. He

wanted her to promise not to tell Dr. Martin; but she assured him that she had not got up that day until one o'clock, that she was not in the least fatigued, and that she was not likely to incur the wrath of the physician.

How long he would have remained, in spite of the clouds that were beginning once more to gather round the brow of Miss Rodgers, is uncertain; but about half-past twelve a sudden noise of wheels was heard in the street.

"Why, there's my cab going away!" said Flingsby.

"It was time," replied Miss Rodgers, "if it has been standing there all the evening."

"Yes; but it's going away without me," said Flingsby; "that's what I particularly complain of. Well, good night," he added, getting up. "I have stopped a great deal too late. It was very inconsiderate of me, Miss Louisa. But you must make allowances for me. I ought to have wanted to go long before, but I couldn't."

Reminding Mrs. Maynard as he went out of

the room that he was to come the next day at four o'clock to take them to Brighton, he hurried down-stairs to solve the mystery of the departing cab.

CHAPTER III.

ANOTHER CAB-TRICK.

WHILE Flingsby was dining quietly with the Maynards in Bloomsbury Street, the annual banquet of the 55th Lancers was being served with great civic magnificence at the London Tavern. Captain Cupper, who had served in that distinguished regiment, did not fail to be present. He was one of the last to leave the room, and, as he came out, was fastened upon by Major Hodder, formerly of the Artillery, who was glad to get any one to listen to his description of a gun that he had invented, and to his remarks on artillery practice generally. Captain Cupper had promised some time before to allow Major Hodder to drive him home in his brougham; but he did

not know at the time that Major Hodder had invented a gun.

"The Government have ordered me to make them an eight-pounder," he said confidentially to Cupper, as they walked down-stairs; "but this is absurd. For who," he exclaimed, with a look of the most bitter scorn, "cares for an eight-pound ball? How many of them will stop an advancing column, which I take to be one of the chief uses of artillery?"

"How many indeed!" said Captain Cupper, sympathetically, as they entered the brougham.

"Why," continued the Major, as the brougham began to move, "they don't do much more harm than ordinary rifle bullets, and troops soon find that out."

"I should think they did!" said Cupper, mournfully.

"No, give me a good mouthful. I want something that will make a hole in a column,—that will knock over a whole file. A twenty-pound ball, if you will have balls; but, for my part, there's nothing I like so much as a shrapnell

shell. If it falls nicely and bursts at the proper moment, a good shrapnell will make fifty men feel the worse for it."

As it appeared certain that this sort of dis-course would last for some time, Captain Cupper asked the Major to put him down at the corner of Aldersgate Street, pretending that he had to call somewhere in the neighbourhood. .

"Call at this time of night!" said the Major, "and in the City? Why, it's past twelve. You can't be going to an evening party in Smithfield, and there's no one to be hanged to-morrow morning at the Old Bailey. I don't understand you. Besides, I have not explained my principle to you, and then there's the application of it, which is still more interesting."

Captain Cupper stayed to hear no more.

"Good-by," he said. "I am sorry to leave you. But I have an important engagement."

"Good night," said Major Hodder. "And go to the devil!" he added, when he had closed the door of the brougham. He then called out through the window to the coachman, "William !

the Club,"—which he reached a little before one. Having ordered a "Collins" and a cigar, in the tone of a man who had invented a new gun, he looked round the room to see who of those present would be most likely to listen to the lecture which he had intended to administer to the treacherous and fugitive Cupper, and which was now weighing heavily on his mind.

In the meanwhile, Captain Cupper, who had taken his usual quantity of wine at and after dinner, had walked down Newgate Street to Holborn. He was bound for Langham Place, where he had chambers, and, as it was a particularly fine night, determined to continue his journey on foot. It occurred to him, however, that he might as well make a short cut, and he accordingly took some turning to the right, and in due time lost himself. He had not gone very far wrong, only he did not happen to know where he was, when suddenly he found himself in Bloomsbury Square. He went on, and having now had walking enough, hailed the first cab he met with, which happened to be stand-

ing in Bloomsbury Street. "Cab!" he sang out,— "Hansom!" but the driver took no notice.

It then occurred to Captain Cupper—whose brain was getting a little obfuscated by the rising fumes of the wine,—that, as the driver didn't answer him, and was apparently asleep, he had better get inside and drive the cab himself. But this was a Hansom,—and to drive a Hansom it is notorious that you must get, not inside but out.

Captain Cupper got inside, however, and had no sooner clutched hold of the reins than the horse started off. At the same time the coachman, who had gone to sleep with the reins properly in his hand, woke up, and the moment afterwards the horse, whom Cupper was powerless to guide, and over whom the coachman had no control at all, ran the cab against a lamp-post, but without doing any harm beyond grazing and chipping one of the wheels.

The gallant Captain now understood the mistake that he had made, and, in obedience to the coachman's peremptory commands, conveyed

through the little square hole at the top of the vehicle—the ordinary channel of communication in Hansoms between passenger and driver—let go the reins. The coachman then cursed him, and told him to get out and give him his card—if he *had* one; the suggestion that he possibly had *not* being uttered in a tone of bitter sarcasm, as though not to have a card was not to have a character.

Captain Cupper had no card.

“I thought as much,” said the coachman.

“Then come with me to my master.”

“Damn your master!” said Cupper; “drive to the station!”

“Station! what station? Did yer see me on a stand? Is this here a hackney cab? Why, yer can’t be right in yer head. Come along to my master,—a-frightenin’ o’ the horse and a-smashin’ o’ the wheels, and I dunnow what!”

“Hallo! What’s the matter? What have you been doing with the cab?” said Flingsby, who came up at this moment.

“You’d better ask this gentleman, sir. He’d

have knocked it to pieces in half-a-minute," replied the coachman.

"Why," exclaimed Flingsby, "this is—no, it can't be—yes, it's Captain Cupper! How do you do, Captain? I hope Tom has not been forgetting himself."

"No, no," said the gallant Captain, "it was not Tom exactly. I wanted a Hansom, and I called out, and no one answered, so I got inside."

Cupper, as Flingsby saw at a glance, was in the position of so many persons who figure in the police reports, and of whom it is written that they "had been drinking, but were not drunk."

He was by no means intimate with Flingsby; but he was in a state of remarkable moral freedom, and was ready to talk to any one about anything. Accordingly he asked him—partly, perhaps, by way of apology for his misconduct—whether he looked "tight;" to which Flingsby replied that he *did* seem a little "screwed," but not "tight,"—which if he had been "screwed" a little more he apparently would have been.

He offered, in the fullness of his heart—or, perhaps, it should be said, of his stomach—to give Flingsby another cab, and also to replace the horse which he said he had just killed.

“No, the horse is all right; and so are you,” said Flingsby: “but let me see you home all the same.”

Cupper tumbled into the cab, half awake and half asleep, and kept muttering, “Whereayou-binto?” “Howsismaynard?” “Rumfelloyouar!” until at last he was deposited at the door of his chambers in Langham Place, when he seemed tolerably recovered, and wished Flingsby good night, and told him that he would call upon him the next day to thank him for his politeness.”

CHAPTER IV.

THE MORNING AFTER.

CAPTAIN CUPPER was inferior in one lamentable respect to Flingsby, but in some others was superior to him.

Flingsby, for instance, was making up to Louisa with all the deliberation that the ex-Artillery officer, Major Hodder, would have shown in approaching a fortress which he wished to undermine, to carry by assault, or in some manner or other to circumvent. Cupper was quite incapable of anything of this kind. He would have thought it ungentlemanly in the extreme to treat any girl as Flingsby was treating Louisa Maynard.

Flingsby, on his side, thought nothing was so ungentlemanly as to get drunk.

“He’s always plotting and scheming; he’s too

great a villain to take his liquor like a man," Cupper would say of Flingsby.

"I like Cupper's declaring that he never did, and never would, deceive a woman," Flingsby once remarked. "Why, he couldn't keep sober long enough to try!"

I suppose there can be no doubt but that Flingsby exercised his mental faculties much more than Cupper, who, in the cultivation of his favourite pleasure, really exercised no faculty at all but that of swallowing.

On the other hand, Flingsby practised deceptions and meannesses of every kind. He would flatter one woman and bribe another, to have an opportunity of telling lies to a third. He maintained, it is true, that he always meant what he said, while he was saying it; and that it was not his fault if his sentiments changed afterwards. And he sometimes complimented himself on the fact that he *could* not make love to Miss Moxom, though every one knew that Miss Moxom would have fifty thousand pounds on her marriage-day, and though Flingsby himself was quite

aware that if he made an offer she would accept him almost before he had time to finish making it. This, however, only meant that he was in the habit of making love to women whom he more or less liked, and that Miss Moxom did not please him enough to enable him to work himself up into a state of sham enthusiasm on her account.

However, no matter which may have been the better man of the two, Captain Cupper was very much annoyed when he awoke the next morning and remembered what a fool he had made of himself in connection with Flingsby's cab.

"What could I have been doing in the fellow's cab?" he said to himself. "It was in Bloomsbury Street, for I remember wondering whether he had been to see the Maynards. It was rather late to pay a visit, as Hodder said to me—confounded bore, that Hodder—when he put me down at the corner of Aldersgate Street. However, that's not my affair. I always said what I thought about the girl, and Haulingswell said the contrary—he's a good fellow, Haulingswell, but not a man of the world. Now we see who's

right. At least, I suppose any man of the world would. These diplomatists think they're men of the world, but they're not. Perhaps Gotnochinko is. But Haulingswell isn't, and my brother, Claret Cupper, as they call him, isn't; and as for young Hilton, he never will be, never can be. Flingsby is not a man of the world—he's only a blackguard. I am a man of the world, but I drink too much. If I had not taken so much champagne last night, and sweet champagne above all, I should have been as sober as a judge. As it was, I didn't really get drunk, but somehow I got into Flingsby's cab. I can't make *that* out. I'll have some brandy and soda."

Having rung for some brandy and soda, and having consumed that refreshing beverage, Cupper went to sleep again, and did not wake a second time until nearly twelve. He then got up, and as soon as he was dressed and had had his breakfast, went out for a walk in the Park, and ended by paying a visit to Haulingswell.

Haulingswell had determined when he was at home to live as much as possible in his own

rooms—to the great annoyance of the charming Irma, who had now no one to torment, for her parents would not stand it. Occasionally the Prince or the Princess would be sent to Konrad Ladislas Arpad on a mission of reconciliation; but Haulingswell had formally retired to his tent, and seemed inclined to remain there.

“I thought, perhaps, you’d gone to the Embassy,” said Captain Cupper. “I am glad you haven’t. I had a most curious adventure last night. I want to tell you about it.”

“Yes, you *do* have curious adventures,” said Haulingswell. “But it is a great pity; you do yourself an immense deal of harm.”

“Oh no, this was only a lark. There was no harm done to any one.”

“Well, what was it?” asked Haulingswell.

“Why, yesterday, you know, we had our dinner—the dinner of the 55th Lancers—at the London Tavern. A man had promised me to drive me home, but I found when he got me into his brougham that he had only offered me a place in order that he might bore me to death about

some gun that he had invented. Of course I made him let me out; and as I had drunk a good deal of champagne—it's a capital wine, whatever people may say against it, if you don't take too much——"

"But you always do?"

"Invariably! However, as I was saying, I made Hodder let me out, and determined to walk home. I knew my way well enough; but, somehow, the wine and the walking, and one thing and another, made me a little confused, so, at last, I thought I would get into a hansom. I got in, and not seeing the driver——"

"I should think not, unless you had eyes at the back of your head."

"Well, as I couldn't see anyone, I caught hold of the reins just as if I had been in an ordinary private cab. The horse started off——"

"And you came to grief?"

"Yes; but that's not the worst of it. It was a private hansom—and to whom do you suppose it belonged?"

"I can't say."

"Why, to that man Flingsby!"

"You don't say so!"

"And where do you suppose his cab was standing?"

"I really can't tell."

"Where is he in the habit of leaving it?"

"Why, you don't mean to say——"

"Yes, I do. It was in Bloomsbury Street. But what is still more remarkable about it, is, that he was inside."

"What, inside the cab?"

"No, indeed. Inside the house. And it was one o'clock in the morning!"

"Well," said Haulingswell, "I can't help it. I am very sorry. That's all I can say about it."

"Yes; but you said she was all right, you know, and I said she wasn't. You must admit now that you were wrong?"

"Well, I begin to be afraid that I was. But am I to understand," he continued, "that you called on purpose to tell me this?"

"Indeed, I did. I thought it would amuse you."

"I can't say it does. Your exploit with the hansom was good of its kind, but the rest of the story I would rather not have heard."

"Why, you don't mean to say you are in love with her, too? I'll tell the Baroness of you, I will, indeed!"

"Please don't," said Haulingswell, pathetically. "But there is a friend of ours who is really in love with her, and who writes about her in the wildest style, and wants me to go and see her, and I don't know what."

"Ah! I know who you mean! The Chinese women can't be very attractive, or he'd have forgotten her before this time. It's a deuced bad compliment to them."

"Well, he has paid them a worse compliment now; for he has left the country. He is on his way home."

"But what will he do? Will he fight Flingsby? That sort of thing can't be done now."

"I don't suppose he even knows of Flingsby's existence."

"That's a thing, by-the-by, that I mustn't

forget, for I promised to call on him to-day. I must do so as a matter of civility."

"Well, don't give my compliments to him, that's all. You can remember me to him in any other way you like."

"Ah! you're all savage with him, because he has cut you all out. I have a great mind to tell him what you say."

"Wait one moment," said Haulingswell, "and I will walk with you as far as his door."

They went out together. Cupper, being sober, met with no adventures, and in due time they reached Langham Place, when they parted company. But in a few seconds Haulingswell was overtaken by Cupper, who found that Flingsby had gone to Brighton. He had left his card, and thought himself very lucky that he had not found the object of his visit at home.

"Now, then," said Haulingswell, "you must walk with me. It's four o'clock. I have nothing to do to-day, and in spite of all you say, I shall go to Bloomsbury Street and ask how Miss Maynard is. The evidence of a man who mistakes a

private for a public cab, and tries to drive a hansom from the inside, must be taken for what it is worth."

"Take it for precisely what it is worth," answered Cupper.

"Ah! you are a great deal too clever," said Haulingswell. "I know the young lady much better than you think."

"How is Miss Maynard?" asked Haulingswell, when they had got to 123, Bloomsbury Street, at the same time giving his card.

"Much better, sir," said the servant. "She's not at home; she's just gone to Brighton."

Cupper smiled.

"Gone to Brighton!" exclaimed Haulingswell. "Of course her mother has gone with her?"

"Yes, sir," replied the servant, "and Mr. Flingsby also. But Miss Rodgers is upstairs; perhaps you'd like to see her?"

"No, thank you," said Haulingswell.

CHAPTER V.

BRIGHTON.

BRIGHTON is chiefly inhabited by girls'-schools, riding-masters, and German bands. There is not much harm in that. Many of the girls at the girls' schools are pretty. The riding-masters wear beautiful boots, and some of the German bands do not play out of tune.

After Tatra Füred in the Carpathians, where you can get nothing, and where no one from this country except Miss Irby and Miss Mackenzie, the well-known Slavophiles, Canon Stanley, Mr. W. H. Bullock, the able author of "Polish Experiences" and "Across Mexico;" Mr. Smith O'Brien, the unsuccessful author of the Irish insurrection of 1848,—and myself, have ever been, there are few pleasanter places than Brighton, where you can get everything.

For this, very reason that you can get everything at Brighton—with the notable exception of the atmosphere, society, and scenery of Tatra Füred—it is much abused by the hypocritical vulgar, who foolishly and basely complain that it possesses so many of the advantages of London.

Brighton is not without its defects. It has no Casino or Kursaal—which might easily be established in the Pavilion—and it has no Italian Opera. Those who are of opinion that the place is already too good for them, would not be obliged to go either to the Italian Opera or to the Kursaal; but Brighton would be all the better for two additional attractions; and the discontented could escape from them as from the attractions already existing, by going to live a mile or two away from the town.

A clever writer on sporting matters has remarked, that as Dublin is said to be the “car-drivingest,” so Brighton may be described as the “horse-ridingest,” place in the world. It is not my intention, however, in these pages to mount on horseback. Hack-literature, among its nume-

rous riders, has many a worthier one than I. All I want to say is, that besides the attraction of the sea and the city, Brighton offers those of the country; and that it is the only place in the world where the pleasures of bathing and rowing, dining and dancing, hare-hunting and fox-hunting can be enjoyed, each in season—and sometimes, at the end of September, for instance, all at the same season.

Flingsby had taken rooms at one of the large hotels facing the sea, and he had taken them in his own name—which he had, of course, a right to do. It was announced in the local journals that “Mr. Flingsby and party” had arrived; and Miss Moxom would not have been pleased, and Mademoiselle Coralie would have been justly incensed to see the amount of attention that one member of the party received from him.

The morning after their arrival—it was a Sunday—Mrs. Maynard was too tired to go out, and Flingsby proposed to take Louisa for a walk on the beach. She declined, on the plea that she must remain with her mother; but Flingsby

•

would hear of no refusal, and Mrs. Maynard urged her so persistently to go, and impressed upon her so forcibly the utter absurdity of coming to the sea-side and then remaining all day long cooped up in an hotel, that at last she consented.

She knew very few people ; but those she did know seemed all to have come to Brighton, as to a place of rendezvous. First she met O'Fiddle, who, exhausted by his critical labours of the previous week, had hurried down to the sea-side to recruit his wasted energies. He bowed and passed on.

Then she met Turpin, who had a house at Brighton, and who winked—absolutely winked ! —at Flingsby, almost at the same time that he bowed to her.

“Come and see me,” he said, “and bring her with you, you know. You'll come, won't you, my dear ? You shall never sing at my theatre, if you don't.”

Louisa, very much confused, said she hoped Mr. Turpin would excuse her.

"Not a bit of it," said Turpin. "This is the first time I have seen you since your illness, and you must come and dine with me."

"But my mamma is here."

- "Never mind that. Bring the old girl with you."

Poor Louisa! To hear her beloved mother spoken of as "the old girl!"

"It's an affectionate way he has. You must not mind," said Flingsby, seeing that Louisa was annoyed.

"Why, you're not offended, Miss Maynard, are you?" exclaimed Turpin. "Lor' bless you, I didn't mean to be rude. I didn't, upon my soul! But if your ma will come, we shall really be very glad to see her. You'll meet a lot of them: Medora; your rival, little Chanterelle,—the first time she can't sing you shall take her part, and cut her out, only you must learn it, you know; old Stick-in-the-mud; the Velletris and ever so many more."

"Who is old Stick-in-the-mud?" asked Flingsby, this being an appellation which Mr. Turpin applied somewhat at random.

“Stick-in-the-mud? Why, old Wurzel—‘mangel-Wurzel,’ as I call him, because he makes such a hash of everything. That other Stick-in-the-mud, Boppi, is coming too—if his wife’ll let him. Ah! they’re a rum lot, Miss Maynard. Boppi, the baritone, is in love with Chanterelle; Chanterelle is in love with Wurzel, the tenor; Wurzel is in love with Medora; Medora is in love with Flingsby; Flingsby’s a bigger fool than I ever took him for, if he isn’t in love with you; and if I were the luckiest fellow in the world, instead of being the cursedest, unluckiest beggar that ever breathed, why then you’d be in love with me.”

Louisa did not know what to do, so she looked foolish, and was silent.

“You have got your light comedy manners on to-day,” said Flingsby, in a tone of mild reproof.

“And you’ve got no manners at all on, to-day or any other day,” replied Turpin. “But, without any chaff, will you come and have dinner with us at five? We must dine early, because some of them have to catch the train. Make him

come, Miss Maynard. One word from you will settle it."

"I am much obliged to you," answered Louisa; "but as far as I am concerned, I must stop with mamma, who is really very ill. Of course, that is no reason why Mr. Flingsby should not go."

"Oh, isn't it!" exclaimed Turpin. "However, I shall be very glad to see him if he likes to come, and if you like to let him come."

Flingsby shook his head.

"Pray do not imagine that I direct Mr. Flingsby's actions," said Louisa.

"Well, you'd have a good deal to answer for, if you did," remarked Turpin. "However, I see that neither of you will come. I shan't forget it, Miss Maynard. You're growing strong again, and you'll be coming to me soon about an engagement, and if I offer you anything better than a place of deputy-substitute in the chorus, my name's not Barnabas Turpin. Good-by. For shame! for shame!"—and Turpin, with a deprecatory wave of the hand, went his way.

"I can't bear that man!" said Louisa, as soon as he had gone.

"He's not a bad fellow," replied Flingsby, "only he doesn't know how to behave himself."

"It is a fault, certainly," said Louisa, contemptuously.

"But what was to be done, Miss Maynard? I would have stopped him in a moment, only for your sake, I didn't wish to quarrel with him. If you still think of coming out on the stage, you will find him very useful."

Louisa walked on without uttering a word; but she said to herself that she wished very much she had never come to Brighton.

Just as they were going into the hotel, they met Velletri and his wife. Louisa wished to hurry past them without speaking, but Velletri would not allow it.

"Miss Maynard, where are you going?" he said, in an Italian-English, which I will not attempt to imitate. "I am enchanted to see you. You are once more looking so well. You have your complexion again, and you seem quite

strong. Ah, you do not know my wife ! Theresa, when you have spoken enough to Mr. Flingsby, I will introduce Miss Maynard to you."

"What is it, my dear?" said Madame Velletri, turning round.

"I want to introduce you to Miss Maynard."

"Oh, I am so glad to meet you, Miss Maynard," she said. "My husband has been talking about you a great deal. He would have brought me to see you when you were ill, only he was so afraid of disturbing you. However, you're a great deal better now, and I hope we shall see one another often in London."

"You are very kind," said Louisa,—as Madame Velletri in fact was.

"Do you dine with Turpin to-day?"

"No," said Louisa.

"Oh, I made sure you would. He's a great friend of Mr. Flingsby's, you know, and you would meet a number of people there. It will be a capital party."

Louisa could not say that she didn't care

whether Mr. Turpin was a friend of Mr. Flingsby's or not, and that Mr. Flingsby was nothing to her. If for no other reason, she understood that in saying such a thing she would not be believed. She felt now more than ever that she was compromised in connection with Flingsby. Not that Madame Velletri treated her with the slightest disrespect. On the contrary, she was full of attention towards her; for Madame Velletri no more cared than her husband did what the relations between Louisa and Mr. Flingsby might be. She had heard that Louisa was a nice, amiable girl. She saw that she was very pretty; and Velletri said that she possessed great talent, and would take a high position on the operatic stage. Madame Velletri thought of her as an artist, and as, possibly, an agreeable acquaintance; and she did not trouble herself one way or the other as to what her private domestic arrangements might be.

"But why won't you come, Miss Maynard?" she persisted. "You don't want any invitation, if he hasn't asked you. We can take you if you

like; but Mr. Flingsby's introduction is the best in the world."

"Thank you," said Louisa. "I met Mr. Turpin just now, and he *did* ask me; but I can't go,—for one thing, my mamma is not at all well."

"Oh, your mamma is down here with you?" said Madame Velletri. "How very nice!"

Louisa looked half-astonished, half-disgusted, as much as to say, "You must be a queer sort of woman to imagine that I should come down here with Mr. Flingsby and without my mamma!" She asked herself whether these opera-people were all mad; and still pondering over her self-imposed question, bowed to the Velletris very coldly, and went into the hotel.

Flingsby, who had stopped to wish his friends good-by in the usual manner, hurried after her. But he saw by the expression of her eyes that she was seriously annoyed, and took care not to speak to her.

CHAPTER VI.

SIX HOURS AT THE SEA-SIDE.

As soon as they had reached the room in which Louisa had left her mother, but where her mother was no longer to be found, she turned round upon her treacherous escort, as she considered Flingsby.

“What do you mean by exposing me to these insults?” she exclaimed. “It is intolerable; and I wonder you are not ashamed of yourself.”

“I am at a loss to understand you, Miss Maynard,” said Flingsby, very calmly.

“Understand me! Have you no ears, have you no sense? Did you not hear what your friend, your intimate friend, Mr. Turpin, said to me? Did you not hear how he spoke of my mother?”

“And did I not rebuke him?”

"Rebuke him ! Then what have you been telling the Velletris ? What can Madame Velletri mean by pretending to be astonished that I had not come to Brighton with you alone ?"

"I don't think you quite understood Madame Velletri," said Flingsby. "She is one of the best women in the world, and would not say an unkind word to you on any account. You told her your mamma was in Brighton, and she said, 'Oh, your mamma is in Brighton !' just for the sake of saying something."

"I shall not stop at Brighton, at all events."

"You must please yourself about that, Miss Maynard. I was in hopes that you might have derived some benefit from coming here. I could not tell that we should come across Turpin, and that Turpin would ask you to dinner. I did not know that you would meet the Velletris, and that Madame Velletri would say she was glad your mamma was at Brighton, or something of that kind. How I wish, Miss Maynard, that you had not taken that walk ! But is it quite fair to make me answerable for all these little vexations ?"

"Little vexations, you call them! They may appear very unimportant to you, but they are more than I can bear. I shall never forget the humiliation you have subjected me to."

She began to cry. The sight of woman's tears always affected Flingsby, and he now felt so much moved that he could not help going up to Louisa and endeavouring, after his own fashion, to console her. But she would not allow it. She had not by any means lost her presence of mind, and she had naturally an aversion to the man which, sometimes, when he was not pestering her with his assiduities, she did not feel, but which she experienced now in its full force.

"Thank you," she said, taking her hand abruptly away from him, "I do not need support."

"You misunderstand me," he replied. "I am grieved, I am cut to the heart to see you in such distress."

"If I wanted consolation you are the last person in the world I should look to for it. It is you who have brought all these indignities upon me."

That, however, could not have been Louisa's sole or even her principal reason for disliking Flingsby. Julian had got her into far more trouble; yet she certainly did not hate Julian.

"I can only assure you that I am deeply hurt to think that I should have done anything, however unwittingly, to give you pain. You cannot imagine how entirely I am devoted to you, or you would not reproach me in this really undeserved manner."

Flingsby *did* feel hurt, and by dwelling internally upon his own grief he managed to look more hurt even than he felt.

Louisa hesitated for a moment, and then threw a conciliatory word to him as one might throw a bone to a dog. Flingsby snapped at it and swallowed it.

"You have nothing to be sorry for, Miss Louisa," he said, with a noble air. "I ought never to have introduced you to such a man as Turpin."

He knew she would remember that it was she who had wanted to be introduced to the manager,

and who had gone to the theatre for the special purpose of seeing him.

"As for Velletri," he continued, "when you had once seen Turpin, it was a matter of course, if you wanted an engagement, that you should make the acquaintance of the musical director. But I do not wish to exculpate myself. I am terribly sorry for what has happened, and I ought to have foreseen it and prevented it."

"You could not help it, Mr. Flingsby, and I ought not to have said what I did. But you understand the horrid position I was placed in."

"Do you forgive me, then?" asked Flingsby.

"I do; and I am sorry I lost my temper." Flingsby shook hands with her in a discreet manner, and she went out of the room to see what had become of her mother.

Mrs. Maynard, fatigued by her journey of the previous day, short as it was, had retired to her bed-room; where Louisa found her lying on the bed, shivering and trembling, and apparently quite exhausted.

"What is the matter, my dearest mamma?" cried the poor girl.

Mrs. Maynard said she felt dreadfully ill.

Louisa flew to the bell and rang it violently.

"What are you doing, Louisa?" asked the mother.

"I am going to send for a doctor."

"No, I don't want a doctor. I shall soon get well if I am left alone."

"No, you must see a doctor. I will ask Mr. Flingsby to go for one."

"Don't leave me just now, Louisa. There is no hurry," persisted Mrs. Maynard.

A servant came to the door.

"Go down to the sitting-room," said Louisa, "and ask the gentleman there—Mr. Flingsby is his name—to come here for a moment."

Flingsby sprang upstairs like a cat.

"Good heavens! what is the matter," he called out, with an expression of anxiety which was not altogether assumed, but which he intensified as much as possible, in the hope that it would not be lost upon Louisa.

"Mamma is ill, very ill," said Louisa, who had come out on to the landing to speak to him.

"If you will allow me, and if she has no objection, I will go in and see her," suggested Flingsby. "Mrs. Maynard, may I come in for a second?" he called out.

Louisa was frightened, and thought her mamma might die the next moment, she looked so ill. She asked Flingsby to come into the room, hoping he might be able to tell what was the matter with her, and whether there was really any immediate danger.

All Flingsby could say was that Mrs. Maynard looked very much exhausted, and that he had better go for a doctor at once. He told Louisa, to console her—as any one but a brute would have done—that her mamma would no doubt be better very soon; but he thought he had never seen her looking so ill before, and it struck him that her long watches by Louisa's bed-side had told dreadfully upon her health, already sorely tried by troubles of all kinds.

"I will be back as soon as possible. In the

meanwhile, be calm, Miss Maynard," he whispered, "or you will excite your mamma. I can assure you it's nothing serious."

Louisa accompanied him to the door of the room, and thanked him profusely and with tears in her eyes for his kindness. Flingsby felt a touch of compunction, and for the first time in his life received the pressure of a pretty girl's hand without returning it.

"I don't know where there's a doctor," he said to himself when he got outside. "They might as well send me out to look for a monthly nurse."

He called a fly. "Do you know where to find a doctor?" he said to the driver.

"Yes, sir."

"I want a good one—Is he well known?"

"Yes, sir."

"Does he live far off?"

"No, sir."

"Drive me to him as fast as ever you can."

"Yes, sir."

The man drove him straight to a chemist and druggist's.

"Confound it!" exclaimed Flingsby. "This is what you call a doctor's shop, I suppose; but I wanted a doctor. . . . Do you see that corner house over there?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, drive me to it."

This was Turpin's house; and it had just occurred to Flingsby that the manager, who spent half his time at Brighton, and who was what is called "a martyr to the gout,"—he had the gout, that is to say—would be sure to know the address of some capable physician.

"Hullo, Flingsby! So you've come, after all," cried Turpin, when Flingsby, without waiting to be announced, entered the dining-room. "But dinner's over! We've got to the dessert already. I'll tell you what. You shall have your dinner in the next room. We'll give you a quarter of an hour to eat it in, and then you shall join us. What have you done with the little girl? I hope you've brought her?"

"I am very sorry," replied Flingsby, gravely, "to cast a chill on this party, but I bring bad

news. The little girl, as you call her, is not with me, and Miss Maynard's mother is dangerously ill. In fact, if you can't tell me at once where to find a doctor who can be depended upon, I don't believe she'll live the night through."

"My God!" cried Turpin; while the foreigners present, women as well as men, apostrophised the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, in all sorts of strange, and, to English ears, irreverent phrases.

"Unhappy woman! let me go to her," said Madame Velletri. "She has no one with her but that poor young girl, who is herself so delicate."

"Holy mother!" exclaimed Signor Velletri. "What is to be done? Can I telegraph to any one?"—which was his idea, at the moment, of making himself useful.

"Look here," said the more practical Turpin. "I expect my doctor, a first-rate man, every minute, and he'll set her right in no time. But he lives only half a mile from here."

"Give me his address, and I will go to him," said Flingsby.

"No, I'm hanged if you do. He won't go out for you: he doesn't know you. He'll think you're up to some lark."

"I don't imagine any one will think that," said Madame Velletri.

"Well, perhaps they won't; but I'm going at all events. And I agree with the fellow who said that a man ought to smoke at all times and under all circumstances, so I shall light a cigar, and Flingsby, you had better do the same. Come on, old boy; you've got something at the door?"

"Yes, I have a fly."

"Come on, then."

"You are at the Bedford," said Madame Velletri, "are you not?"

"Yes," said Flingsby, "you will find Mrs. Maynard at the Bedford."

"Good-by, then, for the present."

CHAPTER VII.

DISPUTATION.

TURPIN's party was quite broken up.

"It gives one the shivers," said Madame Chanterelle, "a man coming in with a face as long as that"—she elongated her own face as she spoke—"and saying all at once that some one is dying."

"I don't like to hear of any one dying, either," said Medora. "It's unlucky."

"Yes, unlucky for the person who dies," suggested Wurzel, the tenor.

"This is not the time for pleasantries," replied Medora. "I mean unlucky for everyone."

"Who is the poor lady?" asked Boppi.

"The mother of a new passion of Mr. Flingsby's," answered Chanterelle.

"If I thought that," said Medora, "I should not care whether she died or not. Flingsby is an ungrateful man."

"But, my dear Medora," remonstrated Chanterelle, "the old lady, in any case, would not be his passion—it would be the young one."

"It's all the same. It serves her right, for throwing her daughter in his way."

"The little girl has pretensions as a singer, I am told," continued Chanterelle. "They say she is ambitious, that she aspires to take my parts. I have even heard that she went so far as to study the part of 'Dinorah,' which, for the rest, I defy her to sing."

"Sing! Do you suppose she can sing?"

"I heard a rumour to that effect," said Chanterelle, "but I did not believe it."

"If you want to know anything about her singing, ask me, for I had once the advantage of hearing her."

"And what sort of a voice has she?"

"A thread of a voice. No voice at all, I might say."

"And does she know how to sing?"

"How should she? She is only an amateur. I heard her try to sing in the music-room one day just after I had been rehearsing."

"And what execution has she?"

"She sings like a mouse. And only figure to yourself, she had the confidence to say to Velletri—I heard her say it, for by accident I happened to be passing the door at the time—that she had learned the music of 'Norma.'"

"Well, I can understand that; but the idea of her attempting 'Dinorah.'"

"I do not agree with you. With her little thin stream of voice she might still get through the part of 'Dinorah;' but the notion of her daring to attempt such a part as 'Norma' fills one with pity."

"But you will allow, madame, that to execute the music of 'Dinorah,' as of other light soprano parts, it is at least necessary to know how to sing. A loud voice alone will not suffice, as it does in many of your robust soprano parts."

"As a general rule, I would as soon listen to

the squeaking of a guinea-pig as to the singing of a light soprano.”

“The so-called singing of a robust soprano always reminds me of the shrieking of a turkey-cock.”

“I can’t understand why light sopranos still exist now that musical-boxes are so cheap.”

“Talk of robust sopranos! Why I have heard you yourself, madame—I suppose you, call yourself a robust soprano?—I have heard you give out a note that would have been a disgrace to a railway-whistle.”

“You have no voice yourself, madame, and it is natural you should envy those who are richly gifted in that respect. As for whistles, I wonder you like to speak of such things. It isn’t only on the railway that whistles are heard! If you are a judge of anything, it ought to be of whistling and hissing, for no one has ever had to put up with more of it than you have.”

“She dares to say so! And to think that only last night I was called three times before the curtain!”

"I know the people who called you."

"If you do, it is because you employ them yourself."

"Ha!" said Wurzel to Boppi, "here is a secret worth knowing. So Madame Chanterelle has a private clique, has she?"

"No," said Medora, to whom the question was addressed,—now rather staggered; "at least, I am not aware that she has."

"But I thought you said you knew who called her on?"

"Well? The audience called her on. Who do you suppose calls *me* on?"

"The public, of course," said Chanterelle, eagerly.

"After all, few singers have had such a success in London as Madame Chanterelle," remarked Medora.

"Ah, madame," returned Chanterelle, "you forget your own triumphs."

"You are very kind to allude to them."

"In presence of your great amiability it would be difficult to avoid doing so."

The rival songstresses in two different styles continued to load one another with compliments and caresses until the servant came to tell them that the carriage was at the door to take them to the railway.

The German tenor, the Italian baritone, and the Italian and French *prima donnas* went up to London together by the half-past nine o'clock train. The journey was peaceful, though now and then, when the suggestive railway whistle was blown, an acute observer might have noticed that Chanterelle scowled secretly at Medora or Medora at Chanterelle. But their eyes never met, and the apparently good understanding between them was not disturbed.

CHAPTER VIII.

MADAME VELLETRI.

IN the meanwhile, Turpin and Flingsby had found Dr. Angus at home, and had conveyed him forthwith to the Bedford Hotel. Mrs. Maynard was much better, and Dr. Angus gave her some wine—to the delight of Turpin, who had a great belief in stimulants—which made her better still.

However, “she had had enough of Brighton,” she said, and the doctor told her that if she had a good night’s rest she might return the next day to London.

“It is a nasty case,” he remarked to Flingsby. “The constant watching, above all the sitting up at night that you tell me of, has evidently had a very bad effect on her health. She may get

better for some time, but it will be a slow affair at best; and she will never be quite well. Her lungs are seriously affected."

Either the wine or some medicine that had been prescribed for her made the patient fall asleep. The doctor, who still remained, then advised Louisa to leave her mother alone, and go down-stairs, assuring her that she would sleep soundly for several hours. Louisa, however, would not go away. Just then Madame Velletri made her appearance, and insisted on replacing Louisa.

"I must turn you out, my dear child. You really shall not stay here," she said. "If you go on watching one another in this style, there will soon be nothing of either of you left."

"It is very kind of you to have come," replied Louisa, "and very kind of you indeed to wish to stay with mamma; but I could not bear to leave her in the state she is in now."

"State! why, my dear, she's fast asleep! Nothing could be better for her. Is not that the case?" she said to Dr. Angus.

"Certainly; it is the very thing she wanted," he answered. "As regards Miss Maynard," he said, "I shall be obliged, if she insists on remaining here, to exercise my authority in a very despotic manner. You must not think, my dear young lady, that our prescriptions are only to be attended to when they are written down in Latin on little pieces of paper. We must be obeyed in everything, or it is no use sending for us at all. As our kind friend, Madame Velletri, is willing to remain——"

"Of course, of course," interrupted Madame Velletri.

Louisa thanked her with a grateful smile.

"As Madame Velletri is willing to remain," continued Dr. Angus, "there is not the slightest pretext for your staying with your mother, unless you want to show how exceedingly obstinate an affectionate little girl can be."

"Let me stay for a few hours," pleaded Louisa.

"No, not even for a few minutes. For your mamma's sake as well as your own you must take care of yourself. She will need a great deal of

attention from you before she is well ; and if you are not very prudent you will not be able to give it to her."

"There, Miss Maynard, you see, even for your mamma's sake, you must give your place up to me."

"But there is not the least reason why you should stay here either," said the doctor to Madame Velletri. "One of the hotel servants would do just as well, or I could even find you a nurse. But you may be quite certain that she will remain asleep for the next four or five hours, and then when she falls asleep again she will not awake until the morning."

"My husband is down-stairs with Mr. Turpin and Mr. Flingsby, and he's most anxious to see you," said Madame Velletri.

Louisa did not like the idea of going down to these three men. Dr. Angus, seeing this, suggested that Madame Velletri should go with her.

"I will tell one of the servants," he said, "to stay here, and to call you—and Miss Maynard too, if she likes—as soon as our patient wakes ; but she

won't wake just yet, you may depend upon that. And now, about the night," he went on, after he had rung the bell. "Where did you sleep, Miss Maynard, last night?"

"Here," answered Louisa, "with mamma."

"I thought so. Well, you won't do that again—at least, not if I know it. Get another bedroom ready for this young lady," he said to the servant who appeared in answer to his summons; "and come back again as soon as you can. I shall want you to sit up with my patient all night."

While the servant was away, Dr. Angus talked to Louisa on all sorts of subjects. He could not make her out. What was she doing down at Brighton with such a man as Flingsby? She had nothing in common with the society he saw her surrounded by, and yet she somehow or other belonged to it. Louisa's conversation threw no light on these points. He was convinced, however, that she was an innocent, excellent girl; and although appearances were so much against her, he discovered that she did not know they

were against her, or at least not to any seriously damaging extent. He had asked her one question point-blank, which he rather thought would have puzzled her ; and the answer she had given to it, also point-blank, had rather puzzled Madame Velletri.

When the servant returned, Dr. Angus made Madame Velletri and Louisa go down-stairs to the sitting-room.

"I have brought you a young lady who doesn't like smoking," he said, as he entered, "so you can put your cigars out as soon as you like. You won't mind my lighting one, Miss Maynard," he added, "because I am going away."

"You wouldn't light one if you had any more patients to see to-night," said Turpin ; "and if you have no more patients to see, you had better stay where you are."

"I shall be very happy if you will do us the favour to remain," said Flingsby ; and the doctor agreed to sit down for half an hour.

Louisa asked Madame Velletri to tell the company that she did not mind their smoking.

"If you come out at the Opera," said Madame Velletri, "and I certainly hope you will—Velletri says you will have a great success, and he never makes mistakes in matters of this kind—you will be about the only artist on the stage who can't stand smoke."

"Then I had better begin and practise at once," answered Louisa; and as she could not be prevailed upon to object, the smoking was carried on in her presence.

Under the cover of its clouds, Madame Velletri and Louisa retired to a corner of the room, whither not even Dr. Angus pursued them.

Velletri, after a time, came and talked a little to Louisa; but she was evidently not in a talkative humour. He promised, however, to give her singing lessons as often as she chose to call upon him, beginning, if she pleased, and if she felt strong enough, from the very next day; and Madame Velletri urged her to profit by the offer as soon as possible, and added that she would always be delighted to

see her, whether she wanted to take a lesson or not.

Madame Velletri, like a good many other women, and perhaps an equal number of men, had a considerable amount of curiosity in her composition, and could not help asking Louisa a few questions about, and in connection with, Flingsby.

She began by sounding his praises. What a nice man he was! So agreeable, so clever, so remarkably handsome too! Did she not think him very handsome? She, who was so beautifully fair, was sure to admire him, because he was so dark?

Louisa replied that there was a certain expression in his face, a sort of sneer which seemed to have become fixed on his countenance, that she did not like at all; and that she always felt a little afraid of him, however kind he might be. She added that she feared she was very ungrateful, for his kindness that day to her mamma had been beyond all praise. But she did not like him.

"What a strange girl!" said Madame Velletri to herself, as she with difficulty restrained herself from laughing. "If she doesn't like him, why does she come to Brighton with him? If she doesn't want people to make very natural mistakes, why does she go to the same hotel with him? I must really talk to her about it a little more plainly, for she evidently won't or can't take a hint."

"Did Mr. Flingsby wish her very much to come out on the stage?"

"Mr. Flingsby?" she replied, with a look of astonishment. "What could it matter to him? Why should he have any wishes on the subject? and if he had, why should his wishes be consulted by her?" . . . "If you will excuse me now for one moment," she added soon afterwards, "I will run up-stairs and see whether mamma is awake."

Madame Velletri knew that there were some people who studied what she called "conventionality," and some who didn't; and she was for entire freedom in the matter. But she did not like treachery; and she felt indignant with

Flingsby when she reflected that he was playing a double game with Louisa, and was making a deliberate endeavour to inveigle, entrap and betray her.

"Let him keep to his Coralies and his Adriennes," she said to herself, "and not try to break the heart of a little angel like this."

When Louisa returned, Dr. Angus saw her come into the room.

"Ah, Miss Maynard, I've caught you," he said, "and you shall be punished. You have been up-stairs to see my patient, when I gave express orders that you were not to do so. Now, you must go to bed."

He rang the bell for the chambermaid, and when she appeared, said to her, with an air of severity, "Take this young lady straight to bed. And you are not to let her go to her mamma's room, mind, where she slept last night. A separate room has just been prepared for her."

"Good night, Miss Maynard," he added. "Seriously, it is quite late enough for you. I shall come and see your mamma the first thing

in the morning, and hope to find her much better."

Louisa kissed Madame Velletri, shook hands with Dr. Angus, contented herself with bowing to Flingsby, as to all the others, and retired to rest.

Turpin stared. "Why, Flingsby," he said, "I knew you were a scamp, but I begin to think now that you are also a duffer."

CHAPTER IX.

MEDITATION AND SUPPER.

"A NICE fool I am making of myself," reflected Flingsby, as soon as his guests had taken their departure. "A perfect idiot! I have done nothing for a whole month but think of her, wait upon her, listen to all the civil things she has had to say to me without ever breathing one word in reply; put up with the impertinence of that old cat, Miss Rodgers; and all to be laughed at by Turpin and the Velletris and the whole lot of them—for Turpin never knows when to hold his tongue, and will spread this story about everywhere."

Flingsby felt that his reputation had been tarnished—his reputation as a bad man.

"Talk about the virtue of English girls," he

said to himself. "If you happen to want a prude, a *béguéule*, a consummate hypocrite, England is the place to find them in by shoals. Some people may call it virtue; I call it cold calculation and infernal deceit."

He heard a laugh from Turpin. "Curse him, what is he laughing at?" he muttered.

Turpin was only laughing because Velletri, in a bungling attempt to light his cigar, had dropped it on the ground; but Flingsby's injured vanity made him fancy that it was *he* who was the subject of the manager's ridicule.

"I am hanged if I stop in this hotel any longer," he said to himself at last, "to be treated like a cur. I should like to know what this little girl thinks of herself? I certainly never knew any girl give herself such airs before. I hate forwardness as much as any man; but by George there's a limit; and the coolness of this young lady, and the way she utterly ignores me, is quite overwhelming. It would make me laugh—as old Turpin laughs—if such a thing happened to any one else, or even if it happened to myself in the

ordinary way. But the affair has gone too far—and I am too far gone also. That is the worst of it. She is a charming little girl; but, damn her, I wish I had never seen her.”

He lighted a fresh cigar, went out into the street, and walked quickly in the direction of Turpin's house. He soon overtook his recent visitors.

“What's up?” cried the manager, when Flingsby accosted him.

“I am,” said Flingsby. “Instead of going to bed, I thought I would take a walk.”

“Quite right,” said Turpin, putting his arm within Flingsby's. “Come along home with me.”

“I was afraid, for a moment, that I might be wanted,” remarked the doctor.

“No,” said Flingsby, “not that I am aware of.”

“So they've turned you out, have they?” said Turpin, soon afterwards.

“Turned me out! What do you mean?” inquired Flingsby, in a tone of annoyance.

“Well, it looks like it, at all events. By Jove, you're a nice fellow to bring a young lady down

to Brighton. You'll be able to keep a girls' school soon. I didn't know you could do the paternal so well, Flingsby. By Jove! I'd trust my own daughters to you, if I had any,—I would indeed."

"If they were at all like you, there would not be much danger," replied Flingsby.

"If they were like Miss Maynard, there would be less danger still," returned Turpin. "But I shouldn't be astonished if it was the old lady you were making up to, after all."

"The old lady is very ill," observed the doctor.

"Yes, poor old woman, I am afraid she is," said Turpin; "we mustn't say anything about her."

"Do they return to London to-morrow?" asked Madame Velletri.

"What's the use of asking him? He doesn't know anything about it," said Turpin.

"No; that is a point for Dr. Angus to decide," answered Flingsby. "If Mrs. Maynard is well enough they will go back to town to-morrow; otherwise, they will remain here."

"I shall call and see her in the morning," said the doctor.

"We want to know," explained Velletri, "because I am going to give Miss Maynard some lessons."

"Are you, Velletri? Well, I'm glad to hear it. And when you say she is ready, I'll put up anything you please for her—'Don Pasquall,' or 'Loochy de Lammermore,' or the 'Traviatore,' or whatever you think best. She's a little trump, and I'll give her a chance."

Observing something like a sneer on Flingsby's face, he added, with some warmth—

"So she is, Flingsby. She's a damned good girl, I can tell you that; and you know it, too—better than any one."

"Come, come, Mr. Turpin, interposed Madame Velletri, "I shall be jealous if you go on praising Miss Maynard like that. We all know she is a good girl, but you need not get so excited about it."

Flingsby walked on without speaking a word.

"You haven't got much to say to-night," said

Turpin to him at last ; "or if you have, you take jolly good care not to say it."

"Mr. Flingsby is sentimental," suggested Madame Velletri.

"I am dreadfully thirsty, I am quite sure of that," answered Flingsby.

"Come in and have some soda," said Turpin. "We dined so early to-day that we shall want some supper ; and I should think you would, for you didn't have any dinner at all. Come along in ;"—he opened the door with a key. "I shouldn't wonder if the servants had all gone to bed."

"First of all, give me some iced soda water," said Flingsby.

"What innocent drinks we innocent men do take !" said Turpin, as he poured it out for him.

"I'll take something stronger afterwards, and as much of it as you like ; but I am dying with thirst now."

"I suppose you don't like playing at cards on

Sunday, do you, doctor?" asked Turpin, when supper was over. "But you're not a doctor of divinity,—I don't see what it matters to you."

"It does not matter to me," said Dr. Angus, "especially as I am going. Besides, it hasn't been Sunday for the last hour. It is past one o'clock."

"Then if we are going to have any cards to-night, we had better begin," said Flingsby. "I don't care how late I stay, but I dare say Madame Velletri will soon be thinking of going to bed."

"Oh, I shall not play to-night," said Madame Velletri. "I am too tired. I will leave you to yourselves. But don't go on too long."

"No; and I will send Velletri to you as soon as I have won all his money."

"He can't have much," said Turpin, when Madame Velletri had left the room, "for I haven't paid him for six weeks, have I, Velletri?"

"Never mind," said Velletri. "I know the money is as safe with you as if it were in the bank."

"It's safer," said Turpin. "If it were in the bank you might draw it out and spend it."

"What shall we play at?" asked Flingsby. "I don't care what it is. Anything you please, and for whatever you like."

"What can you play at with three people?" asked Turpin. "You can't play at Van John, you can't play at Loo,—I should think, by-the-by, you must have had enough of Loo for the present, haven't you, Flingsby?"

"I don't know what you mean," answered Flingsby, sharply.

"Don't you? Well, if you don't, it doesn't matter. Let's play at whist. Jolly old whist is as good a game as any."

"And how shall we sit?" inquired Velletri.

"Oh, I don't know. Anyhow. Who'll take dummy? Would you like to have dummy for a partner, Flingsby? or are you tired of that sort of thing? Come, take it, and fancy you are playing with Miss Maynard."

"All that is very clever," said Flingsby, savagely; "but it gets a bore when you have too much of

it. Do you play, or don't you play? Whist is a nuisance at this time of night. Let us have lansquenet."

"Go on, then; cut for deal. It's you to give the cards, Velletri."

CHAPTER X.

A GAME AT CARDS.

THERE are probably some readers who do not know that at lansquenet the dealer begins by giving a card to each player, finally serving himself, but without turning his card up. The player next to him stakes what he pleases on his card, and the dealer accepts the stake, or if the magnitude of the sum frightens him, passes the deal on. For once, however, he must stand fire; it is not until he has dealt the cards a second time that he has the right of refusing. Thus you may lose a fortune in a few seconds at lansquenet as easily as with dice; or, if you are weak-minded enough to care for card-playing merely as an occupation, you can limit the stakes and play with counters at a penny a dozen.

Flingsby, who was the next player to Velletri, put down a sovereign on a ten of diamonds.

Lansquenet is a democratic, or rather a revolutionary game, at which the court cards are held the lowest in the pack, and at which the king is beaten by the queen, and the queen by the knave. At the same time, mere numbers are far from being a source of power—except that any number will beat a court card—for the majority yields to the minority: nine being accounted worthier than ten, eight than nine, and so on down to the mystic ace, which being degraded to the position of the lowest card in the pack, becomes by that very fact the highest and beats everything. There is no privileged suit, no aristocracy of trumps. The card, however, turned up by the dealer, acquires a special value, and beats cards of the same ordinary value turned up by the other players; in simpler language, “ties pay the dealer.” Thus Velletri, turning up a ten of clubs, won Flingsby’s sovereign; but he at the same time lost a sovereign to Turpin, who had staked that amount on a five of spades.

At the next deal, Flingsby staked two sovereigns and won. Turpin lost a sovereign.

At the third deal Flingsby kept his four sovereigns on the table, and added one for the sovereign that he had lost.

"You stake five?" said Velletri.

"Yes."

"And you, Turpin?"

"One; always one," replied the manager.

Velletri turned up his card, and lost six pounds.

Flingsby left on the table his previous stake of five pounds, together with the five pounds that he had just won. Turpin staked a sovereign.

This time Velletri lost ten pounds and gained one. He had no more money in his purse, and wanted to go up-stairs to get a ten-pound note from his wife. This childish act, however, was prevented by Turpin.

"She won't let you come down again," he said. "She'll say you're losing money at the rate of a pound a second. I'll lend you all you want. Or give him an I.O.U., and we'll settle afterwards."

Flingsby took Velletri's I.O.U. for ten pounds, and placed it, with the ten sovereigns already down, on his next card. Turpin still confined himself to a sovereign.

Flingsby turned up a five, Turpin a six, the dealer a seven; and Velletri lost twenty-one pounds.

"Six and seven make thirteen," he said. "It is an unlucky number.

He handed a sovereign—his last—to Turpin, and wrote another I.O.U. for Flingsby.

"You must not stake my own I.O.U.'s against me," said Velletri, who had curious, half-superstitious fancies on the subject of luck. "It's making me play against myself."

"Well," said Flingsby, "I will put the I.O.U.'s in my pocket, but I say forty pounds all the same."

Turpin staked a sovereign. Velletri dealt the cards, and turned up an ace.

"Now you see that I was right," he said, delighted with his success.

Flingsby gave him back his two I.O.U.'s

with ten sovereigns, and Turpin paid him a sovereign.

Velletri now passed the cards to Flingsby, who finding that Turpin still only staked a sovereign, and that Velletri would not go beyond ten shillings, complained that the game was getting slow.

Flingsby lost thirty shillings.

"If you lose thirty shillings every time, you won't find it slow, will you?" said Turpin.

"The slower the better, I should think."

"I don't know. It would take me a couple of hours to lese fifty pounds, the way you fellows play. I would rather lose it straight off, for I should at least have had the chance of winning it straight off; but we are playing like a set of school-girls."

"I should like to see a set of school-girls playing with Flingsby at lansquenet, or 'at any other game. I am afraid he would cheat them.— I don't know, though, after to-night. He's not such a dangerous man as we thought."

"One pound ten," said Flingsby, languidly,

without noticing Mr. Turpin's elegant bandinage. "You both pay me. . . . One pound ten!" he exclaimed, seeing that the stakes were still the same. "Stake a private box, Turpin, or half-a-dozen stalls. That won't hurt you, if you are afraid to put your money down."

"What's the use of a box to you? You never come near the theatre. I'm hanged if you've been there for the last three weeks. I believe you're afraid of Coralie. She tells me that you've not been to see her for a fortnight. . . . Pay me, please, and Velletri pays you."

"Ten from twenty. Let me see; I lose ten shillings. This is really awful, *un véritable jeu d'enfer*. Velletri, don't tell your wife, please, that I lost ten shillings all at one blow. I should be ashamed to look her in the face again."

"If Coralie knew you were so flush, she wouldn't take your putting down her brougham so quietly," said Turpin.

"I don't care whether she takes it quietly or not," replied Flingsby. "And I can tell you"

another thing : I shan't pay her salary next season."

"Then she won't have an engagement," answered Turpin.

"I can't help that. I have done all I could for her. I asked Sacripanti to let her have a *solo* in the last ballet ; but he said he would as soon give a *pas* to a giraffe. She's too tall, there's no denying that, and she doesn't study."

"Ah, we know the height that suits you now. You didn't talk about Coralie in this way when she first came over ! Then, nothing was good enough for her. How you worried old Stick-in-the-mud about her !"

"Who's 'Stick-in-the-mud' ?"

"Why, O'Fiddle. How you worried him to say something about her in the *Morning Mail*, and how bothered he was—he told me so himself—to find a pretext for getting in two lines about a coryphée ! All he could say was that she had nice eyes. She never had any legs."

"She had also an amiable disposition when she first came over, but she has lost that."

"Perhaps you paid her more attention. I know that you followed her everywhere, like her shadow; that you were always humbugging about behind the scenes when she danced; that you were all day long at her house; and that you would scarcely let her come to the rehearsals. Why, I've met you with her, over and over again, at Richmond. No one heard you complain then that she didn't study enough. Why, you went to Paris after her?"

"Yes, and nearly lost my partnership for my trouble. I was a fool. But the game is not going on, and Velletri is asleep. Are we to play for sovereigns still, or what?"

"Oh, if you really want high play, I can oblige you," answered Turpin.

"For my part, I see no fun in merely turning up the cards."

"Well, then, don't let us have any more of this blind-hookey business. At *écarté* I'd play you for your life, your whiskers, your heart,—if you had one,—any mortal thing."

"And Velletri?"

"What, old Stick-in-the-mud? Let him sleep. I wonder his wife has not been down to fetch him before now. It's nearly four."

"Well, throw out the small cards, will you?" said Flingsby, "while I light another cigar."

Turpin prepared the pack.

"Cut," he said; "it's my deal. Now, what shall we play for?"

"Twenty-five?" suggested Flingsby.

"Just what you please. Twenty-five, then."

He dealt the cards. Flingsby began to play.

"Oh, you don't want any cards? Then I mark the king, and take your queen with it."

Flingsby had also the knave and the ten, with which he could not help making two tricks; but the odd trick was won by Turpin, who marked another point.

"I will bet you another twenty-five that I win the game," said Turpin.

"It's not a fair bet," said Flingsby, "for you are two points ahead. But I will take it."

Flingsby dealt the cards, and turned up the king.

"I propose," said Turpin.

"I refuse," said Flingsby. But he could only make two tricks. Turpin made three, and marked four points.

"You are playing rashly," said Turpin. "If you had not refused, I should only have marked three points. Now I will bet you two to one that I win. That is liberal, I am sure."

"That is to say, if you win, I give you fifty *plus* twenty-five. If I win you give me fifty *plus* fifty."

"Yes. You put seventy-five against my hundred."

"I don't think that so very liberal, considering you mark four points. However, I accept."

Turpin dealt the cards, and offered to bet ten pounds to seventy that he would turn up the king.

"Once set me off," he said, "and I will bet on every blessed thing, and cut or toss for everything else."

"I will lay you sixty to ten, with pleasure," said Flingsby.

"Very good," replied Turpin, who thereupon turned up a knave, and handed ten pounds to Flingsby.

Flingsby this time made all the tricks. He now marked three points to Turpin's four.

"Will you back yourself again for fifty?" asked Turpin.

"No; but I'll double the stakes if you like. That will be about right in the present state of the game, will it not?"

"I don't know. I know nothing about the doctrine of chances, except that you stand a jolly good chance of being beaten. Double everything, if you like. That will make you one-fifty against my two hundred."

It was Flingsby's deal. He backed himself to turn up the king, as Turpin had done, at ten pounds to sixty; turned it up, refused to give Turpin any cards, bet fifty pounds on the odd trick, and ended by winning the game, and with it three hundred and ten pounds, in addition to the ten he had already received.

Turpin pushed him over an I. O. U. for three hundred pounds and ten sovereigns.

"That is the longest game of *écarté* I ever played, although there were no cards given," said Turpin. "And I can't say," he added, "that I should be very pleased to play a good many like them. Why, you will be able to give Coralie her brougham again!"

"Never again," answered Flingsby. "I am tired of her. Besides, I am going to cut that sort of thing."

"You began by telling the truth, by Jove you did," said Turpin; "and now you spoil it. However, I suppose you are going to play me double or quits?"

"Certainly. Let me see; how much have I won of you altogether? Three hundred and twenty pounds?"

"Yes, three hundred and twenty pounds."

"What!" said Velletri, waking up at this moment. "Has all that money been won while I was asleep?"

"Don't you wish you had been in it, instead of

snoring away there?" asked Turpin. "What a pleasant thing it would have been for you, though, if you had lost it! Now then, Flingsby," he added, "it's six hundred and forty, or nothing, I shall have to give you. Go on and do your worst. It's your deal."

"And we'll have no betting. The game shall settle everything."

Turpin consented, and won the game. Three more games, at a hundred pounds each, were played, of which Turpin won two.

"You have not gained so much, after all," said Flingsby. "We've played five games, at tolerably high stakes, and you have won a hundred pounds. I'll play you a finishing game, if you like, for five hundred?"

"But it's to be the last, mind. I would rather not play. I don't want your money."

"Don't talk stuff," said Flingsby. "You haven't won it yet."

Turpin did win it, however.

"This is getting serious," remarked Flingsby, with an air of mock gravity, which, however, was

not quite so much put on as he wished Turpin to believe. "Instead of restoring Coralie her brougham," he said, "I must now stake my own, besides my cab, my horses, and, as I haven't any armour, I suppose I had better say my great-coat."

"Like that fellow in 'Robert the Devil'?"

"Like 'Robert the Devil' himself."

"Haven't you any more money, without joking?"

"I've enough for a cab home. But I won't play for any more. I will have a look at my banker's book first."

"Amos will let you have any amount, you know, on your acceptance. But you needn't pay me, without you like. Any time will do."

"The best time is to-morrow morning—that is to say, this morning, and my cheque-book is at the hotel."

"I should like to play you for your cab-horse, before you go. I never played for a cab-horse."

"I am afraid you're getting demoralised," said Flingsby. "I must put him down at a hundred

and fifty pounds, mind. That's what I gave for him last year, when he was only four years old. He's worth more than that, now."

"It's a long price, but I believe you tell the truth when you're not talking to women. By-the-by," he continued, as he lighted a fresh cigar, "you wouldn't stake your cab also, I suppose? If you lost it, it would be like parting with your stock-in-trade."

"What do you mean?"

"Oh, we know all about it. 'Whose cab is that standing perpetually over there?' 'Mr. Flingsby's.' 'Indeed! And who is it he goes to see?' 'Miss So-and-So.' 'Good God! she is a lost woman.' If I'd a regular dramatic company," he went on, "instead of these blessed screamers—hullo, Velletri, awake again!—I'm blessed if I wouldn't have a piece written, called, 'Flingsby, or the Fatal Cab;' and I would announce that the original private hansom, the property of Robert Flingsby, Esq., had been purchased, regardless of expense, and would figure in the sensation scene."

"When you have done talking, perhaps you will begin to play."

"And when you've done playing," said Madame Velletri, who entered at this moment, "perhaps you will let my husband go to bed. It has struck seven."

"The candles do burn rather yellow," remarked Flingsby. "I didn't notice that it was light."

"*You* look rather yellow, I can tell you; and as for Velletri, he seems half dead."

"Oh! he's all alive," said Turpin. "Come, wake up, Velletri. Open your eyes. Don't you hear them calling out 'music' from the gallery?"

Velletri stared, grinned, and kissed his wife's hand.

"What a fortunate man he is to have some one to look after him," said Flingsby to Madame Velletri.

"What a fortunate thing it would be for a woman to have to look after you!" she answered.

"I am afraid it would be an unprofitable occupation. But I am astonished, Madame Velletri,

at one thing—to find that you are such an early riser. Why, you are actually dressed for the day, or at least for the morning. What a reproof to us.”

“Yes, much you care for the reproof. Before I came in here I wanted some breakfast. But this horrible smell of stale smoke has taken my appetite away.”

“Stale, Madame Velletri?” said Flingsby.
“Why, we have just lighted fresh cigars.”

“Well, go and smoke out on the beach, that’s a good man. Or, better still, go home. Go and see how poor Mrs. Maynard is. I daresay that dear affectionate girl has been sitting up with her in spite of all the doctor said.”

Flingsby felt a touch of shame, and of self-contempt, when he reflected that, with all his love, more or less sincere, for Louisa, he had passed the entire night gambling, while she, perhaps, was wearing her eyes out, and breaking her little heart, by the bedside of her dying mother.

He said to himself that he was incapable of genuine affection, and accounted for this pheno-

menon by the fact that he had been in love with so many different women. He said to himself that if he had been eighteen, he should have passed the night walking up and down before Louisa's window, as he had done more than once at that age before the window of a young lady who was now middle-aged and the mother of many children.

Now he would walk before the window of no young lady, unless he thought there was at least a chance of his being able to persuade her to open it and let him in.

In the meanwhile, he had engaged to stake his cab-horse against a hundred and fifty pounds. He knew that, as he now stood, he should somehow have to part with the animal, and he thought he might as well get rid of it in this way—with the chance of saving it, and getting back a little of the cash he had lost.

"I have a small transaction to settle with Turpin," he said to Madame Velletri, "and then I promise to leave the house. It's an affair of five minutes."

"Well, I will blow the lights out, open the windows, and ask Mr. Turpin to order breakfast. I shall see then whether you will still want to go on playing at cards—for I know that's what you mean."

"I am not the creature of circumstances, Madame Velletri, and I have played at breakfast-time before now. But pray give me five minutes; we are going to play for a cab-horse, and you never saw that done, I am sure. You shall look on and bring me luck."

"Is it a lucky horse?" asked Velletri. "I should like to know that?"

"Well, it is, and it is not. It killed my groom—that was not lucky; but it did not kill Miss Maynard—which *was* lucky, for it was a very narrow escape."

"If it was one of the horses you drove that day in the Park, I shall bet against it."

"You will bet for me, then, won't you, Madame Velletri?"

"Well, I won't bet much."

"Ah! you're all against me. But I don't

care. Will you take the harness and the cab itself for another hundred, Turpin?"

"It's a great deal more than they are worth; but I don't mind, because some day I *will* have that cab in a sensation drama."

"No, I can't stop and see this sort of thing done," said Madame Velletri. "It's horrible! You'll be ruining one another."

"No, Madame Velletri, we shan't both be ruined. Only one at a time," answered Flingsby.

"Cut," said Turpin.

He won the deal. Flingsby took up his cards and prepared to play.

Madame Velletri looked at his hand. "Will you do something to oblige me, Mr. Flingsby?" she asked.

"Anything in the world," he replied.

"Throw up your cards, then. Say you won't play."

"I am afraid it is rather late," he answered.

"Would you, for the sake of a moment's excitement, risk a sum of money that would suffice to support a poor family for several years?"

"Yes."

"Then, if you are determined—don't propose, mark your king, and lead the knave."

In spite of Madame Velletri's admirable advice, Flingsby lost the game, and with it his cab, harness, and horse.

"I will send it round to you all complete this evening," said Flingsby.

"Nonsense ; there is no hurry."

"What a dreadful thing!" said Madame Velletri.

"Not in the least," replied Flingsby. "It will save me the expense of a coachman. I am going to sell my brougham and another harness-horse—unless Turpin likes to play me for them?"

"Anything you like," said Turpin.

"No!" said Madame Velletri. "There has been too much play already. I don't know how much you have lost, Mr. Flingsby, but I am sure it's a great deal. Here comes the tea," she added. "I'll pour you out a cup, and then you must go straight back to the hotel ; and if they are up—but Miss Maynard is sure to be, it's now nearly

nine o'clock—say that I shall call round in an hour. I would go with you now, but you are such a figure.”

“Thank you, Madame Velletri. I shall go and take a swim as soon as I leave the house.”

“Well, you *do* require something of that kind.”

“Thanks once more. Will you play me for my coachman, Turpin? He doesn’t starve the horses. On the contrary, he has always made my four eat as much corn as any one else’s eight.”

“You must reserve him for another time,” said Madame Velletri. “You would play for anything or any one, I really believe. Suppose Miss Maynard really cared for you, would you stake her affection on a card?”

“I wouldn’t stake a lock of her hair,—no, not a single hair, not an eyelash of Miss Maynard’s, against a thousand pounds.”

“You would against ten thousand, perhaps,” suggested Turpin.

“No, I would not. When I said a thousand I meant ten thousand, a million,—in fact, any sum.”

"This is something like a passion," observed Madame Velletri. "However, you had better be careful in that quarter, Mr. Flingsby, or you will have to reckon with me. I am going to take Miss Maynard under my protection."

"She could not be in better hands."

"That is a very doubtful compliment, coming from you."

"What," asked Flingsby, without taking any notice of Madame Velletri's observation, "is the meaning of that ridiculous French proverb, *Heureux en amour, malheureux au jeu*?"

"You don't think it is always true?"

"I don't know what it means? Is it simply that a man in a state of utter spooniness will be too much absorbed to pay proper attention to his cards,—though heaven knows that he may be in that state and yet not be fortunate in his love. Or does it only signify this, that a man cannot expect to be lucky in everything?—which is also absurd."

"I don't know. I only know that I have been

trying for the last two hours to get you out of this house."

"Well, then, do you understand this proverb :
Mal de dent, mal d'amour ?"

"Not in the slightest degree."

"Does it mean that tooth-ache is the most painful malady in the world, and that the sufferer from it gets about as much sympathy as if he were suffering from unrequited love?"

"Both are pains which torment, but do not kill. Unrequited love is something like the tooth-ache."

"Yes; and your friends advise you never to see her again, just as the surgeon recommends you to have it out."

"Well, I don't know whether it is love or the tooth-ache, that keeps you here; but if you want to do me a very great favour, please go. Velletri will scarcely have time to sleep. Turpin, I believe, has already gone to lie down."

"Good-bye, Madame Velletri," said Flingsby.
"I am very, very sorry indeed to have disturbed your night's rest, as I am afraid I have done ;

and I hope to see you again in an hour. Velletri, good-bye!"

Flingsby went out impoverished, exhausted, and disgusted, got into a machine, threw himself into the sea, walked back to the hotel, and found that Mrs. Maynard was dead.

CHAPTER XI.

LOUISA AND HER MOTHER.

"I WISH I had stopped in the sea. I might just as well have drowned myself," he said to himself, when the porter at the hotel had given him the news, and he began to reflect on his position. "I might just as well be dead as leading this filthy life,—and a great deal better."

The first thing he thought of in connection with Mrs. Maynard's death was, not "How will Louisa bear the shock?" but "What will she think of my having stopped out all night, when I knew that her mother was so dangerously ill?" This idea troubled him so much, that he would not go near the room where Mrs. Maynard was lying dead until he had seen the doctor (who, when Flingsby arrived at the hotel, was up-stairs),

and asked him where Miss Maynard thought he had passed the night, whether she expressed any great surprise at not seeing him, and so on.

"My dear sir," said Dr. Angus, "she doesn't know and she doesn't care where you passed the night. I don't think she would have been surprised if you had come, and I am sure she wasn't surprised that you didn't come. If you want me to speak frankly, I don't believe she has thought of you at all. She is overwhelmed with grief, and can think of nothing and feels nothing but the irreparable loss that she has sustained."

Dr. Angus was disgusted with Flingsby's egotism; but he erred in saying that Louisa had not thought of him.

Louisa, as Madame Velletri guessed, had sat up all night with her mother; and some time before her death, which took place at eight o'clock, Mrs. Maynard had talked a great deal of Flingsby and of his excellent disposition. According to her he was devoted to Louisa, wished to marry her, and was the only person likely to make her happy. There was no reason

at all, she said, why Flingsby should not marry her. He had known her father, who was in as good a position as any of the Flingsbys. He knew that she had been well brought up, and that she was better educated and possessed more accomplishments than most girls. Above all, he was very fond of her, that was evident; and Miss Rodgers did him injustice, for he had not been much worse than other young men, and he had now reformed, and, under Louisa's influence, judiciously exercised, might become a model husband.

Louisa thought she knew one young man who was rather better, and who bore the proofs of his superiority in his countenance, his manners, and in the general tone of his conversation. Flingsby's studied politeness, though very well and naturally done, did not please Louisa; and the little sardonic and cynical touches by which it was sometimes relieved, and which struck her as more natural still, displeased her excessively.

But with respect to Julian, her mamma endeavoured to persuade her that, though doubtless an

excellent young man, he was not likely to marry her. His family would never countenance such a match. He himself had never even spoken of marriage,—though, for the matter of that, Flingsby, as Louisa pointed out, had never spoken of marriage either.

Indeed, the proverbial hatred of the devil for holy water could scarcely exceed that of Flingsby for the marriage service; and he was not even an *épouseur* in the sense which the great prototype of his class was said by his valet to be, the "*épouseur du genre humain*." However assiduous his attentions might be, he never made the remotest allusion to marriage; and he rather piqued himself upon what he considered his peculiarly honourable conduct in avoiding the subject, so that he might not afterwards be accused of having practised any downright deception. A man must always have something to be proud of, which need not necessarily be something lofty.

Louisa, however, could not argue with her sick mother, whose strength was fast failing her. She listened patiently to her eulogium on

Flingsby, but could not but hesitate when she was called upon to promise that if he made an offer of marriage she would accept him.

The servant put to watch by Mrs. Maynard's bed-side had, of course, fallen asleep. About seven o'clock Louisa was obliged to wake her and tell her to go at once for Dr. Angus.

She now became convinced that her mother had not long to live, and that she was gradually sinking. Her grief was almost too much for her, but by an heroic effort she restrained it and did not allow her mother to see—unless she could see it in her white face and her staring eyes—that she was in despair.

The servant who had been told to go for the doctor had told another servant to go; but having once been sent out of the room, she took advantage of her temporary dismissal not to go back again too soon.

In the meanwhile Louisa was kneeling down by the side of the bed, gazing into her mother's face, and endeavouring in vain to warm her hands, which were getting colder and colder.

"If you would promise to marry him, Louisa, I should die happy," said the poor woman, speaking with great difficulty.

"Die, mamma! oh, don't say that!" now no longer able to keep back her tears. She pressed her hands to her mother's cheeks, and kissed her forehead and lips frantically, but as tenderly as she could. Then she buried her head in the bed-clothes, and stuffed the counterpane into her mouth, that she might not distress her by her sobbing.

"Don't cry, my darling; don't cry so," said the dying mother. "Oh, if I could know what would become of you after I am gone."

"You have done so much for me, dearest mamma, that I shall always be able to support myself."

"You will want less than when I was with you. But you are so young, so unprotected. And he's not a bad man. . . . He brought you a jelly. . . . And he wanted to kill Wolfenbüttel. . . . And he would not let them cut your hair. . . . Where is he? . . . Is that his cab?"

"No, dearest, he is here, at Brighton."

"The Prince of Wales was at Brighton. . . . Where's Miss Rodgers, then? . . . She don't like him. . . . She's a dear, good woman. . . . But Flingsby's a gentleman. . . . You must swear to me . . ."

"My darling, I will do anything you wish. Anything in the world, mamma."

"Good girl!" said the unhappy mother, now gasping for breath. She looked at Louisa's hair, which was hanging in disorder about her neck and shoulders, and began playing with it. "They wanted to cut it," she said. Then her head fell back, she closed her eyes, and Louisa did not know whether she was dead or alive.

At this moment Dr. Angus came in. He looked at his patient, and felt her pulse, while Louisa watched him eagerly, waiting for his first word as though he had the power of deciding whether her mother should live or die.

After a few seconds, which were not seconds to Louisa, he said to her: "Come here, my child. You disobeyed me once, and you were quite

right; but you must do what I tell you now. Come with me," and putting his arm round her, he took her into the corridor, and asking the servant the way to her room, conducted her to it.

"Shall I ever see her again?" she cried out.

"Yes," the doctor replied.

"Shall I ever see her again alive?"

He made no answer.

She burst into tears, sobbed convulsively, and soon became unconscious.

Doctor Angus laid her upon the bed, placed a pillow under her head, and told the servant to loosen her dress.

The corridor was now full of servants, and other curious people, attached to, or lodging at the hotel. The doctor gave the necessary instructions to some of them in respect to the body, said to those who inquired the cause of Mrs. Maynard's death, that her lungs were diseased, and to himself that sitting up so many nights during her daughter's illness had had a great deal to do with it, wrote a certificate and then went back to the room where he had left Louisa.

No one can console a daughter for her mother's death, and Dr. Angus understood how any such attempt would pain Louisa in her present state of anguish. He did not assure her, but he convinced her, of his sympathy. He remained with her for more than an hour, and did not leave her until she had promised him not to go into the room where her mother was lying—or at least not until she saw him again. He also gave her some soothing draught, told the servant to put her to bed, and when he went in to see her again found that she was on the point of going to sleep.

It was then that he went down-stairs and met Flingsby, and expressed his astonishment and something more at Flingsby's wanting to know whether Miss Maynard had been troubling herself about *him*.

CHAPTER XII.

FLINGSBY'S WATCH.

PEOPLE are buried, and burials are very painful things, in Brighton as in other places. It will be enough to mention the fact that Mrs. Maynard, having died on a Monday was interred on a Wednesday, and that Wednesday not being an opera-night, Turpin and Velletri, who had gone to London on Tuesday, came back to attend the funeral.

Madame Velletri had remained at Brighton all the time, and, that she might be constantly with Louisa, had shifted her quarters to the Bedford Hotel.

As for Flingsby, he had sent up his card to Louisa on the Monday as soon as he could learn that she was awake ; and he said all that could

and ought to be said under the circumstances through Madame Velletri. He did not expect that she would receive him, nor did he much desire it, for he felt that he could not put himself in tune with her acute grief. He pitied her certainly; and he experienced something like remorse when he thought of the part he had played towards her. He answered the cries of his conscience, however, in his own fashion, by saying that after all he had done her no harm, and that the very foundation of his acquaintance with her had been his endeavour to help her on in the profession she wished to embrace.

Still he was much troubled in his mind. Indeed he could scarcely bring himself to realize his position. Mrs. Maynard was dead up-stairs; he was sure of that. Louisa kept going into a swoon and would not let him see her. He felt every now and then as if he also were falling into a swoon.

He had had no sleep. He had smoked without intermission from twelve the night before until ten that morning. Turpin had put a bundle

of fifty cigars on the table after supper, and when Flingsby came away there were scarcely a dozen of them left. During the whole of that time, off and on, he had been playing for very high stakes; and cards danced before his eyes as he closed them in a vain attempt to collect his thoughts.

"I must try some tea," he said. "If tea won't do any good nothing will, and I must knock up and go to bed. I wonder whether they have taken breakfast up-stairs? If I send to ask, instead of being obliged to me, they will perhaps think me a brute."

"Ah, Louisa! Louisa!" he said to himself. He had a higher opinion of her than ever, now that he had heard her praised in such enthusiastic terms by Turpin and the Velletris. The idea of marrying her had never crossed his mind before; but he now resolved to adopt the last resource of the baffled seducer, and, if she would accept him, to make her his wife.

He rang the bell, and was walking up and down the coffee-room, wondering how long it would be

before the waiter made his appearance, when Madame Velletri came to the door.

"Will you come up-stairs in about half an hour?" she said.

"Directly, if you wish it."

"Well, come as soon as you can. I want to take Louisa to Mr. Turpin's. The housekeeper will attend to her. We can't let her be here when the undertakers come."

"Certainly not."

"And in the meanwhile I want you to stay up-stairs. I think she desires it also."

Flingsby did as he was told. After taking a hurried breakfast, which he could scarcely manage to swallow, he went to the room where Mrs. Maynard was lying dead, and where Madame Velletri was waiting for him.

"Sit down here," she whispered to him (as though the dead body could have overheard her), "until I come back. Louisa is a little better now, and perhaps the air will do her good."

Flingsby sat down, and tried to read a book; but he saw nothing but typographical confusion

before him, and shut the volume in despair. Then he began once more to figure to himself his position.

“I thought I should be walking and driving about Brighton with a charming young girl,” he reflected, “and instead of that I am watching a corpse. It’s very odd. . . . I wonder how they’re getting on in Broad Street without me. They didn’t like my rushing off to Paris, after Coralie, without leave. . . . Now they’ll say that I ought to have given them notice that I was going down to Brighton. . . . It’s impossible to return to London to-day. I should be a brute ; and no one ever said I was, except Medora—and Coralie, the other day, but that was because I put down her brougham.”

Thinking, and occasionally muttering, these things, Flingsby nodded, recovered himself, nodded again in his chair, and at last fell fast asleep.

Two hours afterwards he was awake by the most horrible of all noises—the noise of undertakers screwing up a coffin.

He started, rubbed his eyes, stared at the

long black box, called out "Good God !" and fell asleep again.

"Poor fellow !" said one of the undertaker's men, as he looked at Flingsby's haggard, cadaverous face. "How he must have suffered ! It must have been his mother."

He slept like a top, and his snoring was like the sound of a windmill. When he awoke a second time it was night. There were lights in the room, and Madame Velletri was sitting by his side.

"I beg your pardon," he said.

"I only hope your sleep has done you good," she answered. "You did not know I was here, and you have been asleep for more than six hours. It is now nine o'clock."

He gave a deep sigh, or at least drew a long breath, and asked where Louisa was.

"She is at Mr. Turpin's," said Madame Velletri, "and, by-the-by, you had better go for her. I told her some one should fetch her at eight o'clock, but I didn't like to awake you. You looked so horribly fatigued."

"You mustn't send *me*, Madame Velletri," he said, "I wouldn't go for the world."

"What do you mean?"

"Don't ask me. I'm afraid to see her."

"*You*, who, I thought, were so devoted to her?"

"So I am. But she's not devoted to me. She hates me."

"I am astonished to hear you talk in this way, Mr. Flingsby. You *must* see her, and you must go to the funeral. As for taking her back to London, I will attend to that."

"Thank you a thousand times, Madame Velletri."

"Now go for her. And I can tell you one thing. She does not know how you passed all last night; so you need not be afraid on that account."

Flingsby found Louisa much calmer than he had expected. Instead of regarding him as though he were accountable for her mother's death—which was what he had really feared—she was almost affectionate in her manner of receiving him.

She was in a very impressionable state, and Flingsby had spoken sympathetically to her. Besides, he looked so dreadfully ill, as though he really took to himself some portion of the calamity which had befallen her; and, above all, she remembered her mother's last injunctions. Though she had not promised positively to act up to them, she would not run counter to them, and she looked upon Flingsby at that moment much as her mother would have had her look upon him.

"I ought not to complain at such a moment as this," he said to her as they were driving towards the hotel, "but I am really the most unfortunate, most unhappy man in the world."

That was really his opinion in regard to himself at that particular moment.

"Why so?" Louisa asked.

"May I tell you another time?"

"Without doubt!"

"Then I shall remind you of your promise."

"I shall not forget it," she said.

They had now arrived at the hotel. Dr. Angus was then with Madame Velletri, and between

them they forced Louisa to go to bed in her own room.

Flingsby was also sent to bed. While Madame Velletri sat up and prayed, and occasionally perhaps slept, in the mortuary chamber.

CHAPTER XIII.

A FAMILY COUNCIL.

LOUISA, who, a few hours before, had disliked the Velletris, and had regarded Turpin with the greatest possible aversion, now looked upon Madame Velletri as her dearest friend, and had so much confidence in the kindness and good feeling of Turpin, that she had commissioned him, through Madame Velletri, to break the sad news to Miss Rodgers, and, if possible, bring her down to Brighton on the Wednesday morning. It was shocking that a woman of Miss Rodgers' principles should have to travel down to Brighton between an operatic manager and a musical conductor; but such was her destiny, and she could not avoid it.

"I have something terrible to tell you, Miss

Rodgers," said Turpin, when he called upon her. "My name is Turpin—Turpin, the manager, you know," he added, observing that Miss Rodgers started, and fancying that she perhaps mistook him for the late Turpin, of highway robbery and gallows celebrity, "and I have just come from Brighton."

"Good God!" she exclaimed, "has anything happened to Miss Maynard?"

"No, not to Miss Maynard. She is as well as she can be, under the circumstances."

"It is her poor mother, then! Dear, dear!"

Miss Rodgers began to sob, while Turpin still remained silent.

At last he said: "She died this morning at eight o'clock."

"And that wretch Flingsby!" exclaimed Miss Rodgers, in a paroxysm of grief and indignation.

"Oh, don't speak of him in that way," said Turpin, a little shocked to hear his intimate friend described as though he were the worst of men.

"I will say this of him, at all events," cried Miss Rodgers, emphatically, "that he is a very, very unlucky man. I will say more than that. I will say that he is an accursed man. He takes Louisa out for a drive and all but kills her. He takes my poor, dear friend," she began to weep again, "down to Brighton for her health, and she dies there. He is a devil, not a man! And to think that I should have been the cause of Louisa's knowing him!"

"Well, mum, he's a rum customer," answered Turpin, "that I admit; but he didn't upset his phaeton on purpose, and it's not his fault that poor Mrs. Maynard died. I think you are a little too hard upon him, I do indeed."

During the journey down to Brighton, Turpin and Velletri treated Miss Rodgers with the greatest possible respect, and even abstained from smoking. She had resolved not to speak to either of them; but she had so many questions to ask about her lost friend and about Louisa, that in spite of herself she soon found herself talking to both, and she was astonished

to find what kind-hearted men they seemed to be.

Her meeting with Louisa was most painful. Madame Velletri she could not make out at all. At first she avoided her as a woman who had shown herself on the stage (Madame Velletri had a very nice mezzo-soprano voice, and had only given up singing since her marriage); but after a time the evident fact that she had an excellent heart outweighed, in Miss Rodgers' mind, the mere supposition that she perhaps smoked cigarettes, and was generally no better than she should be.

She could not bring herself to speak with even decent civility to Flingsby, which neither surprised nor grieved him. They shook hands, as a matter of form, but that was all.

Immediately after the funeral, which it had been arranged should start, not from the hotel, but from Turpin's house, Turpin, Flingsby, Miss Rodgers and Madame Velletri, held a sort of family council on the subject of Louisa's affairs. Louisa had desired to be left to herself in the

apartment specially assigned to her ; and Velletri was correcting copyists' errors in the orchestral parts of a new opera.

"The hotel bill is paid, to begin with," said Turpin. "Otherwise——"

"That is settled," interrupted Flingsby. "That was my affair."

Miss Rodgers scowled at him as much as to say, "And a nice affair you made of it."

"The bill for the funeral has not been sent in."

"Never mind that," said Flingsby.

"Now the really important question, Miss Rodgers, is, what is Miss Maynard to live upon? Does she inherit anything from her mother?"

"No, not a farthing."

"Nothing but debts, I suppose?"

"I am afraid so. Mrs. Maynard had nothing to depend upon but a small annuity which dies with her."

"Well, I'll get up a concert for her benefit. There'll be no trouble about that."

"Not the least," said Madame Velletri. "Velletri will arrange everything."

"Well, that will give us two or three hundred pounds. And before that is spent, I don't see why the little girl shouldn't be making her fortune at the theatre. Velletri says she'll do, and he ought to know."

"Oh, it's quite certain," said Madame Velletri.

"Well," remarked Turpin, "I think we've soon settled that business."

"Ahem!" began Miss Rodgers, who had already given symptoms of having something on her mind which she was now about to throw off. "I cannot say, as Miss Maynard's oldest friend, that I should quite like to see her at the Opera."

"Perhaps you would rather see her at the workhouse?" suggested Turpin. "I think that shut her up," he whispered soon afterwards to Flingsby, finding that Miss Rodgers had nothing to reply.

"I also have something to settle with you,"

said Flingsby, taking Turpin on one side. "Put this in your pocket."

"Oh, that be blowed!" replied Turpin. "I won't take it. Upon my soul, I won't. We oughtn't to have been playing at all that night. I'm blessed if we ought."

"You had better take it at once," persisted Flingsby. "I shall pay it into your banker's if you don't."

Turpin took the cheque: it was for six hundred pounds.

"I shall be in London to-morrow," he added, "and I will send the cab round to you; perhaps drive it round myself. And, by-the-by, if you see Amos at the theatre tell him to do nothing, and that I shall be sure to call on him to-morrow or the next day."

"All right," answered Turpin.

"Now," continued the manager, addressing the company generally, "business is business, and whether it be a funeral or a farce, must be attended to. I must go to London for the rehearsal of a new ballet, but dinner will be

ready in half-an-hour, and our good friend, Madame Velletri, will see that everything is right. We don't want Velletri for the ballet-music, do we?" he said to the wife. "That is a cut below him! Any fiddler out of the orchestra can conduct ballet-music."

CHAPTER XIV.

FLINGSBY, MOXOM, AND CO.

"THERE is one thing that amuses me about your nephew," said Mr. Moxom, on Thursday morning, to Mr. Nathaniel Flingsby, head of the firm of Flingsby, Moxom, and Co.; "and that is the delightfully cool way in which he absents himself from business. Some young men, occupying the same responsible position that he does, would probably think it necessary to make an excuse if they could not come, or even to give notice beforehand if they had deliberately resolved to stay away. But from Mr. Robert Flingsby, not one word. He appears to think that he is in some government office, where he can take six weeks' holidays in the course of the year, day by day, or week by week, just as the fancy happens to seize him."

"And if he would even content himself with six weeks," answered the uncle, in no way disposed to shield his offending nephew.

"Ah! it's a great pity," continued Mr. Moxom. "If he didn't stay away so much, he wouldn't have so much time for spending money. Idleness is a most expensive thing. I remember when I was travelling in Germany, with only a courier, my daughter, and my daughter's maid. The money that man made me spend! It was perfectly frightful! Now your nephew is travelling and amusing himself all day long, though it is only in London and the suburbs; and I am afraid, from what I hear, that he has very expensive travelling companions. His carriages and horses must cost him a pretty sum of money in the course of the year."

"Well, I have lectured him, until it is quite useless to do so any more," replied the uncle. "And the provoking thing is, that he always admits the propriety of what I say, and even goes beyond me. He knows the value of minutes as well as any one. He condemns irregularities of every

kind, and looks upon punctuality as the thief of time—that is to say, as the soul of business. In fact, I never knew a young man of sounder principles; only he never acts up to them.”

“What is the good of theory, without practice?” said Mr. Moxom.

“What, indeed!” said Mr. Flingsby.

“Good morning,” said Mr. Flingsby, junior, entering at this moment. “How do you do, Mr. Moxom? I hope Miss Moxom is quite well? How are you, uncle? I am afraid I am a few minutes late.” He looked at his watch. “Yes, it has struck eleven.”

“Mr. Moxom and myself have been here since ten,” remarked Mr. Flingsby, senior.

“Yes, because you take a nine o’clock omnibus from Bayswater. It is a very good plan too. I think some day of taking a nine o’clock omnibus myself.”

“To take a nine o’clock omnibus, it is necessary to be up by nine,” said Mr. Moxom, sententiously. “However, you are in capital time to-day. If you were always here by

eleven or half-past, or even twelve, it wouldn't matter."

"Twelve o'clock is a very late hour for beginning business," said Flingsby, in a deprecatory manner. "I suppose there are numbers of letters for me to answer?" he continued.

"I should think nearly a hundred. We were on the point of answering them ourselves in English, and then giving them to a translator to put into German and Italian. As for the French ones from Marseilles, Pearson has answered them."

"Pearson's French style must be original. It will make our Marseilles correspondents open their eyes."

"Our Marseilles correspondents would have opened their eyes still more," retorted the uncle, "if their letters had not been attended to at all. They had been lying here for upwards of three days."

"Oh, I forgot to say," exclaimed Flingsby, "that I was compelled to go out of town."

"I wish you had said it before starting," said

Mr. Moxom, "it would have saved us an immense deal of trouble and anxiety."

"Well, I will go in and do the work at once," said Flingsby; "it won't take me so very long."

He went into his room and began scribbling at an awful pace. One of the letters was from a merchant at Naples, named Menotti, who was about to send over a cargo of sulphur.

"Menotti," he said to himself, "I wonder whether he is any relation?" He actually addressed him as "Signor Luigia," which was an odd thing on the part of Flingsby, who rarely lost his presence of mind. He had to write to correspondents at Genoa, at Leghorn, at Naples, at Venice, at Trieste. "Why, I shall throw every port in the Mediterranean, and the whole of the Gulf of Venice, into a state of agitation before I have finished," he said to Pearson, who sat in the same room with him.

"Yes, trade's brisk," answered Pearson.

"It's a great deal too brisk for me; at least, tradesmen are," remarked Flingsby.

"You don't mean that, Mr. Robert?"

"Indeed I do. I am bothered on all sides. That's why I can't work."

"Perhaps if you had worked more you would not now be bothered so much; you would not have had time to spend so much."

"That's one of Moxom's ideas. I have heard him say the very same thing, almost in the same words. You ought to be more original, Pearson."

"It's a very good idea, Mr. Robert, whether it's original or not."

"I dare say," muttered Flingsby. He was now finishing his last letter. "Thank heaven, that's over!" he exclaimed, when he had concluded. "And now, Pearson, I want to talk to you seriously. Are they both gone?"

"Oh yes, they went away at three o'clock."

"Well, then, I want to talk to you about a matter of business, private business—my own affairs, I mean."

Mr. Pearson was silent. At last he said—

"I am afraid it will be no use telling me anything about them."

“ Hear what I have to say, at all events.”

Flingsby went to the door, which opened into a room where a number of clerks were sitting, and closed it.

CHAPTER XV.

A FINANCIAL STATEMENT.

FLINGSBY was a bad man, but not quite bad enough—not quite low enough, that is to say—to understand the art of being vicious with prudence. According to the rather crude *mot* of Lovelace—the reader will please to observe that the virtuous Richardson is responsible for it—“girl, not gold” was his favourite object of pursuit; and he would have sacrificed any amount of money, if money could really have helped him, in his designs upon Louisa. Indeed, money was one of the least sacrifices he was prepared to make. For Louisa’s sake he would have committed a small crime, or he would even have led a virtuous life, had not his previous habits rendered that impossible. For a time, however,

he really seemed to have reformed, and this was entirely due to his love for Louisa, and not to any fundamental change in his principles. Indeed, he could scarcely be said to have principles at all. But he altered his mode of life, partly and chiefly that he might find favour in Louisa's eyes, and partly also because he had now lost all taste for such pleasures as had formerly attracted him.

The worst of it was, he was so deeply in debt that if he lived the life of a saint he could now scarcely recover himself in a pecuniary point of view. It was rather late in the day to reform; nor, to do him justice as a consistent being, had he any intention of reforming, except with the immediate view of raising himself in the opinion of Louisa; but it was absolutely necessary that he should limit his expenses.

His virtuous fit had not seized him very long when three out of six bills on which he had borrowed money in his private capacity from Mr. Amos, became due. He had fifteen hundred pounds to pay forthwith, and something like a

hundred and fifty pounds to pay it with. In such a case as this there is nothing to do but to keep the hundred and fifty, and let the fifteen hundred remain owing. That, at least, is the view the debtor usually takes of the matter, though the creditor may be excused for seeing it in a different light.

It was hard that things should go so dead against Flingsby just when he was beginning to lead a moral and virtuous life. It almost made him abandon the experiment in disgust.

"It is no good trying to turn over a new leaf," he said to himself. "I have not borrowed any money for the last six weeks,"—the bills that had just come due were renewals at ninety days' date—"I have dined at home nearly every day for a month; I have not played at cards, except once, since I don't know when; I never spend a farthing except on necessary household expenses; I have lost my cab, and shall not buy a new one; I have only two saddle-horses, and am ready to part with one, if I can get my own price for it; I mean to be in the City every day by eleven, and in bed

every night before one ; I never by any chance go behind the scenes even for a moment ; I have made Coralie put down her brougham, and if she had only quarrelled with me about it, as she ought to have done, would have broken off with her altogether. I don't see what more I can do, and yet I shall be swamped by these bills just as if I had been leading a life of the most reckless dissipation."

He had determined the day before his appearance in the house of Flingsby, Moxom, Flingsby, & Co., to try Pearson, who united the functions of head clerk and cashier ; but he had been to him so often before on the same business, that it seemed almost useless to make any further experiments with that much-tried man.

As Flingsby had anticipated, Mr. Pearson began by refusing positively to make any further advances. The would-be borrower put forth all his eloquence, all his jocularities, all his blandishments, in vain. Mr. Pearson was immovable.

Still the spendthrift junior partner did not despair. He had discovered some time before that Mr. Pearson, in spite of his staid and solemn

demeanour, had a weakness for operatic life ; or rather that he had an ardent desire to know, from personal observation, what really took place behind the scenes of the opera. He wanted to hear a *prima donna* speak, to see a *première danseuse* at close quarters, and to judge for himself whether the young ladies of the *corps de ballet* were half angels, half fairies, as they appeared to be when he gazed upon them from the audience department, or only ordinary girls with their cheeks rouged and their eyebrows blackened.

Flingsby turned the conversation to theatrical and operatic subjects. He told original anecdotes and gave sketches from personal observation of the principal singers, spoke with enthusiasm of the regions behind the curtain, and of the pleasure of wandering in those quasi-Elysian fields.

"I suppose that lady I saw the other night in 'Dinorah'—Madame Chanterelle, the one who came out this season, is the best singer now on the stage ? " said Mr. Pearson.

"I know one in the same style who is much better," answered Flingsby; "but Chanterelle sings well."

"I don't think much of her in the way of beauty," objected Mr. Pearson. "She is graceful, perhaps, but then she is so slight. No; give me Medora. There's a woman for you! What a figure! what a bust! I suppose she is what you would call a 'stunner!'"

Flingsby said to himself that he was not very likely to call Medora or any other woman a "stunner," and that if he were to give free expression to the thought that was in him at that moment, he should call Mr. Pearson an ass. However he replied—

"If I were to call her a stunner at all, I should say she was a fourteen stunner. I should think that must be about her weight."

"Aha! very good. But without joking, she is really a fine woman, isn't she?"

"I don't know. That's quite a matter of taste. There is plenty of her at all events."

"Well, and what is Adrienne the dancer like?"

"Adrienne the dancer is a good deal like Medora the singer. She is decidedly too fat for her vocation."

Mr. Pearson shook his head, as if to say that it was difficult for a woman to be too fat.

"I will introduce you to both of them, if you like," said Flingsby.

"Will you though, really?" asked the senior clerk.

"Certainly I will, if you will come to the opera with me to-night."

"What! behind the scenes?"

"Undoubtedly: that is to say, unless you would rather call upon them separately at their own houses."

"No, no! I should like to go behind the scenes above all things."

"Well, come and dine with me at seven, and after dinner we will go to the opera. I must leave you now," he added; "for I must call upon old Amos, and settle with him before I go home."

"Oh, never mind him. Tell him to do his worst," said the head clerk, jocularly.

"But he might do it," replied Flingsby, seriously.

"Well, how much could you settle with him for?"

"Fifteen hundred pounds."

"What, the entire amount?"

"Yes."

"And how much could you put him off for?"

"Perhaps for five hundred. There are three bills, and perhaps, if I took up one, he would hold over the two others."

"Well, I don't know. You have had all your salary for the year in advance, and you have had eight hundred pounds besides. I doubt whether your share will give you much more than that."

"It gave me twelve hundred last year."

"It may not be as productive this year."

"In any case, you might let me have the five hundred. You half suggested that yourself. Just enough to take up one of these confounded bills. That is the very least I can do."

"And what shall you do with the two others?"

"Renew them."

"And pay a lot of money for the renewal, and find yourself three months hence in the same scrape you are in now?"

"There's nothing else to be done. I can't make any composition with the scoundrel. It would bring the firm into disgrace."

"He would make you a bankrupt if you talked of such a thing, and force you to sell your share. Indeed, as I told you once before, that is the principal thing you have to fear. Your uncle was saying, only the other day, that you would be getting him into some scrape, and that he wouldn't stand it. Then, you ought to think of the injury you might do yourself in another quarter."

"What quarter?" asked Flingsby, abruptly.

"Well, you must excuse my mentioning her name, but I was thinking of Miss Moxom."

"If I were only injured in Miss Moxom's opinion it wouldn't much matter," said Flingsby.

"Oh!" replied Mr. Pearson. "You know that you are safe as far as she is concerned; but there is the father also to be thought of."

"I don't care for either of them," said Flingsby.

"What a man!" exclaimed Mr. Pearson: "not care for fifty thousand pounds!"

"Well, to keep to the business before us," Mr. Pearson continued, "if I advance you five hundred more, you will have had thirteen hundred pounds this year besides your salary."

"That makes two thousand eight hundred pounds; but at the present moment I am living at the rate of eight hundred a year. You see I ought to have no difficulty in getting straight."

"You ought not, certainly; but whether you will or not is a different question. However, you had better take the five hundred and do your best with it. I don't know what your uncle will say, and as for Mr. Moxom it would drive him mad if he knew it."

"After all," said Flingsby, "we are not very far from the end of the year, and I dare say when the accounts are made up, you will find that I have not overdrawn more than a hundred or two."

Mr. Pearson gave the junior partner and

foreign correspondent a cheque for £500, impressing upon him at the same time that it would be impossible to let him have a farthing more that year. "Indeed," he added, "if it were known that I had made you this advance, it might be as much as my place is worth."

Flingsby thanked the worthy clerk, paid the cheque into his bank, and then proceeded to his usurer's. He could not afford, however, with only £650 in the world, to take up a bill for £500, and pay for the renewal of two others for the same amount; so he arranged to renew all three, and gave Amos a hundred and fifty pounds for the accommodation. It was not dear, as Amos justly remarked, for it was only forty per cent., and there were some bill-discounters who would have charged sixty.

"No," said Amos, "it'sh not tear at all, for here'sh only vun name on ze pill. Anozzer man voodn't look at paper viz only vun name to it."

"You know deuced well, Amos, that if I were to die to-morrow the bills would all be paid," replied Flingsby.

"It'sh good paper, but only 'vun name on it," insisted Amos. "Vid ze siggenture of ze firm to it I'd do it for five, I vood upon my soul."

"You know that's impossible," said Flingsby.

"And vot'll you do vid ze sree ozer pills," asked Amos.

"Do with them?" replied Flingsby. "Why pay them, of course, when they're due."

"Ah! I'm glad to hear you shpeak like zat. Cos you mustn't renew any more, you know. It von't do; you'll ruin yourself vid ze interesht, and I shall never get ze prinshipel. Zat von't shuit neezer of us, zat von't!"

"How is Turpin?" asked Flingsby soon afterwards.

"Turpin! Vy, he'sh always vell, isn't he? But 'aven't you seen him?"

"No, not lately."

"And ze little girl, ze beautiful Louisa, you have seen her?"

"I have seen Miss Maynard," said Flingsby, coldly.

"Oh," said Amos to himself; "not 'Louisa,'

but 'Miss Maynard!'" And he wondered whether Flingsby had quarrelled with her, or what could have happened.

"If you wanted to give her ze shveetest set of diamondsh in ze world, I could sell you von dirt cheap," he said. "Zey pelonged to an Austrian archduchess, who sold 'em pecause—pecause she vosh hard-up."

"Thank you, she would not accept them."

"Not diamondsh!"

"No, she would not."

"I never 'eerd tell of such a sing!" exclaimed Amos, indignantly. "She's no voman, if she won't accept diamondsh!"

CHAPTER XVI.

PEARSON'S FIRST APPEARANCE ON ANY STAGE.

AFTER leaving Amos, Flingsby went home and awaited the arrival of Mr. Pearson. The dinner was dull enough, and about nine o'clock, when they had finished their cigars, Flingsby proposed that they should start for the opera.

In spite of various prohibitory notices addressed to strangers desirous of gaining access to the sacred precincts of the stage, Flingsby, for special reasons already explained, had the free run of Turpin's theatre, and went where he pleased. So did some eight or ten other subscribers, chiefly personal friends of the manager, on whom he thought he could count in the hour of need, or men of high position whose patronage and general countenance it was desirable to retain.

But the fashion of "going behind the scenes," is pretty nearly at an end, and it is well that it is so. Formerly a *débutante* was almost in as much need of an influential protector who would take care of her (artistic) reputation, and see her well launched upon the operatic sea, as candidates for Christian baptism are of godfathers and godmothers. At present, managers—at least in England—have more confidence in the public, and they know that, as a general rule, the only effect that loiterers behind the scenes have upon the fortunes of a theatre is now and then to interfere with the necessary operations of the scene-shifters. There are no more *grands seigneurs*; and their modern imitators, instead of spending their money like the Lauragais and Guéménés of happy operatic memory, prefer to ruin themselves by means of race-horses or financial speculations.

When a Count de Lauragais could be found to pay an immense sum of money by way of compensation to the managers of the Opera for abolishing the seats on the stage; where a Duke de Bouillon would lavish a million on a favourite

singer, and a Prince de Soubise another million on a favourite dancer; and when one great patron of the opera, the Prince de Guéméné, did not consider himself ruined until he had spent an incalculable fortune to the last sous, and got into debt to the extent of forty thousand livres; then it was doubtless worth while to allow the frequenters of the Opera to go behind the scenes.

So it was in England when the Opera was kept up by the subscriptions of a score or so of noblemen, who certainly would have had a right to complain if they had been debarred from manifesting, otherwise than by paying their money, the great interest they took in the establishment they were supporting. So it was, too, when the personal and quasi-official intervention of the British ambassador in Paris was necessary to enable our managers to get artists from the French Académie, and when an agent arriving in Paris without good and pressing letters to the representative of his sovereign in France, would not have been able even to obtain an

audience from the minister entrusted with the operatic portfolio.

At present our directors care less for "the nobility and gentry" than for "the public in general," and the principle of free trade has been introduced in operatic as in other affairs. At present, too, the regions around the stage are the scene of much work, much preparation for work, but very little amusement.

Well-meaning but ill-informed mothers of families imagine that if their darling sons imprudently venture behind the scenes they will forthwith be snapped up by fascinating ogresses, who are waiting there for the especial purpose of devouring them. The innocent young men would like nothing better. But they may be quite sure that no one will so much as speak to them, unless it be some carpenter, of a humorous turn of mind and thirsty habit of body, who may try to persuade them that they ought to "pay their footing." As, on the other hand, every one will look at them, and as they are sure to get in the way, and to do something awkward in trying to

get out of it—such as running against a scene, or tumbling down a trap, or showing themselves on the stage—their position altogether will probably not be a pleasant one.

As regarded the opera presided over by Turpin, that *impresario* was too good a man of business to allow the passage leading to the stage to be blocked up by curious visitors. The few subscribers who had the *entrée* did not come every night, nor, as a rule, did they come all together. Turpin would scarcely have stood it.

“I don’t want my Lord Tom Noddy, or the Marquis of Muttonhead,” he would say, “humbugging about after my ballet-girls while the performance is going on. There is a time for everything.”

“You see, it is nothing very remarkable,” observed Flingsby to Mr. Pearson.

“Oh, I don’t know,” replied Mr. Pearson, in a tone which implied that he *did* consider it remarkable, but not so much so as it might appear to other men—less men of the world than himself.

Mr. Pearson, however, was really a little dis-

appointed. The scene was at once less brilliant and less grotesque than he had hoped to find it. "It would be too much, no doubt," he said to himself, "to expect that each particular ballet-girl should be an houri worthy of a special place in Mahomet's own private apartments in the Mahometan Paradise; but where are the fairies drinking pots of porter, the goddesses standing with their arms akimbo, the angels full of freedom and graceful impertinence, whom I have seen represented in caricatures, and even in theatrical pieces, professing to give a faithful picture of life behind the scenes?" Alas! the porter-drinking fairies, the slangy goddesses, the impertinent angels, were more invisible even than the Mahometan houris.

"What do you think of the *corps de ballet*?" asked Flingsby. "There are some nice girls among them, are there not?"

"Pretty well; they are not quite so light-limbed as I should have fancied," answered Mr. Pearson, daring to assume the air of a connoisseur and critic.

"They run rather large at this theatre, I think that's it," said Flingsby; "and with the exception of Coralie—whom you must remember—I scarcely ever knew a tall woman who was really graceful, though they often have a certain elegance, no doubt."

"Just so," said Mr. Pearson, who was beginning to feel rather knowing.

"Just look round. Do you see that little girl with the very white teeth and the very black eyes? She's quite a child—'small and early,' Sir Charles Winkworth calls her. He declares it's the best thing he ever said, so you may imagine what his other sayings are worth. Come here, Emmie!" he added, addressing the young lady under discussion, who was no other than Miss Somers—already known to the reader by her love-letters, her brougham, and her silk dresses.

"How likely!" she replied.

"You'll be sorry if you don't," said Flingsby.

"I shall get over my grief in time," she answered. "But do you really suppose I'm going to

run after you like Madame Medora? I am not a *prima donna*; I'm only a poor little ballet-girl."

"I want to introduce you to my friend, Baron Rothschild," said Flingsby, walking up to her; "I know you'll like him."

"I should think so," she laughed. "But that's not Rothschild, is it? You're chaffing me."

"Well, it's a very good imitation of him. My friend is a banker."

"It's a fine profession," said the little girl. "I have a great respect for bankers."

Mr. Pearson was presented to Miss Somers, and she talked to him about the performance that was going on, what they were playing at "the other house," the news of the day, and even the weather. If he had met her at an evening party he would have said that she was a very nice, straightforward, unaffected girl; but meeting her behind the scenes of the opera he didn't know what to make of her.

"Hallo, here comes little Clark!" said Flingsby. "How well she looks in white."

"You had better tell her," remarked Miss Somers; "she'll be so pleased."

"I mean to," replied Flingsby. "How do you do, Lizzie? We were just speaking of you."

"I am sorry to hear it."

"Are you, indeed? I was just proposing that you should be presented with a medal of honour as a reward for getting yourself up so nicely this evening."

"I wish you would present me with a chair, for I am awfully tired. I have either been dancing or standing up as one of the Princess's attendants, or changing my dress, or something or other the whole night. I haven't sat down for a moment."

Flingsby ran for a chair and earned the thanks of the fatigued Lizzy.

"Turn that gas down," cried a voice, which was at once recognised as that of Turpin. "I'm blessed if you won't ruin me with the gas bill alone. . . . Hullo, Flingsby," he said, as he came in sight. "Why, we've not seen you for an age. What are you doing with my young

ladies? Come, I can't stand this. I can't, upon my soul. . . . How do you do, Miss Somers; how are you to-night? . . . Why, Miss Clark, what are you thinking of? Sitting down in a new white dress just home from the wash? I'm shocked! I am, indeed! Who do you suppose pays for the washing, and the starching, and the ironing of your dresses? And then, instead of taking care of them, you actually sit down in them! I don't give you a guinea a week for that, you know."

"Bother your guinea a week," replied Miss Clark; "I must sit down, mustn't I, if I feel tired?"

"Not if I know it. Not when you're wearing a new white muslin dress belonging to the theatre."

"I want to introduce my friend, Mr. Pearson, to you," said Flingsby, glad to have an opportunity of creating a diversion in favour of poor little Lizzie Clark.

Turpin, however, merely bowed to Mr. Pearson, and then continued his attack upon the unfortu-

nate, hard-working girl. "Look at Miss Somers," he said; "Miss Somers doesn't want to sit down, and Miss Somers finds her own dresses."

Turpin's favourite model and example replied that she did not sit down because she was not tired.

"Miss Somers doesn't come to the rehearsals," said Lizzie Clark, without moving from her seat. "I come to all of them. I am at the theatre morning, noon, and night."

"What have you got there?" said Turpin, continuing his round, to a property-man. "What do you say? A *papier mâché* pie? Why, that banquet-scene will ruin me, it really will. What did you do with the old one? You didn't eat it?"

"Some one trod on it."

"Trod on it! What a thing to do, to go and tread on a pie! I don't know what you wanted with a new one at all. The old one might have easily been mended. But no! you think I have nothing to do with my money except to buy *papier mâché* pies."

Turpin, bullying ballet-girls, and visiting every part of the theatre to see that there was nowhere any idleness or any waste, was as different from Turpin in his own or any one else's house as a military disciplinarian on a campaign is from a free and easy soldier in private life.

He mentioned that this attentive and minute supervision was absolutely necessary. "If you don't keep a sharp look out after them all," he would say, "they will eat you up in no time. Locusts are nothing to them."

"Here is Medora just coming off," said Flingsby to Mr. Pearson.

"Good evening," Medora began; "I thought you were never coming near us again. I am glad to see that you are in mourning! I wonder how much mourning you would wear if *I* were to die! But because the mother of the little Menotti dies, no black is black enough for you."

"I do not happen to be in mourning for the poor old lady at all," he said. "I am wearing ordinary evening-clothes."

"I know better," persisted Medora.

"I think we have had enough of this," Flingsby whispered to his friend. "Medora is in a rage, and it's no use introducing you to her to-night."

"Well, let us go somewhere and have supper," suggested Mr. Pearson, who wished, he said, to "wind up the evening."

Mr. Pearson walked out of the theatre without meeting with any accident, and will probably never enter one again except from the front. But he will never be tired of telling his friends of his adventures behind the scenes, of the fascinating appearance and manners of the women, and of the "great lark" that it was generally.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE WHOLE DUTY OF AN OPERA-SINGER.

THE arrangements for Louisa's *début* were going on rapidly and well. Immediately on her return to London, Turpin, with great good sense, began to urge the desirability of getting her to work at once, if only to prevent her dwelling too much on the great affliction that had befallen her. Mrs. Fitz Henry had called in Bloomsbury Street and carried her off to Sydenham; but Turpin, profiting by the fact that a concert was taking place at the Crystal Palace for which he had to supply the singers, pursued her and had a long conversation with Mrs. Fitz Henry herself on the subject of Louisa's prospects, and of the stage considered generally as a profession.

"Certainly, if she is to appear at the Opera at all, the sooner she does so the better," said Mrs.

Fitz Henry; "that is to say, if you think she is sufficiently prepared. You know how she is situated, Mr. Turpin, of course?"

Turpin signified that he did.

"There are some people," Mrs. Fitz Henry continued, "who have a prejudice against the stage, but I confess I am not one of them. Besides, Louisa's poor mother was a professional singer, as you are aware, and no one ever whispered a syllable against *her*."

"You see, I can't trouble myself about those matters. If my singers please the public, that's all that concerns me. In private let them please themselves."

"Exactly so. A publisher does not ask an author before he brings out his book whether he has married his grandmother. An artist is allowed to exhibit his pictures, even though he may have quarrelled with his wife. These are details, important enough to lovers of gossip in private circles, with which you as a publisher and exhibitor of operatic talent cannot be expected to occupy yourself."

"That is right," said Turpin. "You've hit it exactly, mum."

"I suppose," continued Mrs. Fitz Henry, "Louisa will be able to choose her own associates?"

"Lor bless you! Why she needn't speak to one of them if she doesn't like, except now and then at rehearsal. But they are not such a bad lot as you seem to think. Look at Madame Velletri! You wouldn't find a better woman any where. You should have seen her give it to Flingsby when she found that he was pitching it rather too strong into the little girl down at Brighton, and that she didn't like it."

"But supposing she had liked it?"

"Well then," said Flingsby, "she wouldn't have interfered with them on any account. That's Madame Velletri all over."

"This is an original sort of man," said Mrs. Fitz Henry to herself, much amused by his panegyric on Madame Velletri.

"No," continued Turpin: "Miss Maynard can please herself. She can be as fast as she likes or

as quiet as she likes. Only it soon gets known, and she mustn't be one thing one day, and one thing another, or she won't get on with anybody. And she mustn't give herself airs—but that she's sure not to do. She mustn't be too proud of her voice, or her virtue, or anything else, because they won't stand it."

"She'll have plenty to be proud of, you may be sure; but she won't be proud, all the same."

"It's not a bad thing for her, I can tell you," Turpin went on, "to have such a woman as Madame Velletri to take an interest in her." Madame Velletri was Turpin's ideal of the perfect woman. "Not that she can do her much good, if the young lady can't take care of herself. She won't be always running after her, and watching her, and that sort of thing, like a mother. But that does no good. A girl must go her own way, and you can't stop her."

"Louisa is out in the garden," said Mrs. Fitz Henry. "Shall we go and look for her?"

Mr. Turpin went into the garden, where his magnificent frock-coat with velvet facings, his

well-oiled, well-curved jet-black whiskers, and his rich glossy hat with turned-up brim, excited the admiration of the school-girls, who looked at him with awe and titters, from the room where Miss Fanshawe was supposed to be instructing them in the mysteries of arithmetic.

"How are you, Miss Maynard? I am glad to see you looking so much better. You see we won't let you alone—we must have you. I have just been talking to Mrs. Fitz Henry about you. If she will excuse my saying so, she's the only sensible woman—except Madame Velletri, of course—that I have met for a long time. I wish I'd a dramatic theatre, Mrs. Fitz Henry, and that you'd accept an engagement. You'd do in high comedy parts, I can tell you."

Mrs. Fitz Henry was always sensible enough, when a doubtful compliment was paid her, to take it in its best meaning; and on the whole she really felt flattered by Turpin's remark, which was of course intended to be flattering.

Turpin's excessive gaiety had rather a depressing effect on poor Louisa, who could not by any

possibility have screwed herself up to his pitch, and did not even attempt it. She, of course, thanked him for coming to see her, and it was settled that she should return to London the next day, in order that she might begin studying a part forthwith, under the direction of Velletri.

"She wants you to come out in 'Dinorah,'" he said. "You'll look the part well, at all events, and that, really, is something to be thought of."

"I don't look light-headed, do I?" she asked.

"If you want to know what I think of your appearance, Miss Maynard, I'll tell you," answered Turpin. "But it won't be my fault if I pay you too many compliments, as you call them."

"I hope you will reserve them all for my first appearance."

"Well, if you fail, you see, I must tell you. If I say you sing most beautifully, but don't offer you an engagement, you will know what that means. And if I don't say anything at all about your singing and *do* offer you an engagement, you will know what that means, too. When I *do*

pay compliments to a singer they are good ones, I can assure you, and you can cash them from ten to four at the London and Westminster Bank, Bloomsbury Branch."

"I must tell you one thing more," said Turpin, before he left. "My season will be over in three weeks, so you had better lose no time. And you're not to sing at the concert, mind that. Velletri wants you to, but I won't have it. You must come upon them like a clap of thunder, and carry everything before you."

Turpin, who would have scorned to mix his wines, could not help, now and then, confusing his metaphors.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A SUPPLIANT.

BESIDES being advertised in the usual manner, Mrs. Maynard's death had been made the subject of a short article in the "Morning Mail," in which the hand of O'Fiddle could be recognised. O'Fiddle was a good fellow, and whenever any of his friends died had always a tear and a paragraph to give them.

O'Fiddle's notice was copied into most of the English journals and translated in several foreign ones; and it was read by Julian at Alexandria, where he arrived on his way to England, about three weeks after Mrs. Maynard's death.

"Poor Lousia," he said to himself. "How broken-hearted she will be! I wonder if I could write to her anywhere. But I should be in

London as soon as my letter, and she knows already that I have started."

Julian had, in fact, written to Louisa, to the care of Messrs. Wood, Wire, & Co. But Joseph Wire, after opening and reading the letter to satisfy his own jealous curiosity, had decided not to forward it.

Besides the necrological article, O'Fiddle, at Turpin's suggestion, wrote a good-sized paragraph about the projected concert. It was to be given at the theatre. Velletri was to conduct; and Chanterelle, Medora, Wurzel, Boppi, and all the principal members of the company, were to sing. Turpin announced it as "for the benefit of the only daughter of a distinguished artist, lately deceased."

O'Fiddle pointed out that it was less unfortunate to leave only one daughter unprovided for than to leave half a dozen. But Turpin replied that "that was all bosh," that there was something pathetic in the mere sound of the words "only daughter," and that as for the sense that didn't matter in an advertisement.

The day after the announcement of the concert appeared, Louisa received a visit from Herr Wolfenbüttel, who expressed his sympathy for her in her bereavement, apologised for past insults, and expressed a hope that he might be allowed to play at her concert.

"My sonate in E moll minor, te same as Shappell vood not puy—tam rogues all of tem!—vood make a great zenzation," he said; and Louisa, with her never-failing amiability, promised to speak about the matter to Signor Velletri.

"Velletri, te contuctor, you knowed him? He cannot contuct, no more as my valking-stick. Ven Mr. Turpin wants a goot contuctor, vot knows te time, and can gave te time, and can make te orchester take te time, you may tell him from me dat I am soch. Your Velletri got no prains."

"That man must be mad," said Miss Rodgers, when Wolfenbüttel had gone.

"No," said Louisa; "he's only vain."

In the meanwhile, Louisa was studying her part night and day.

"Don't overdo it," Miss Rodgers said to her once or twice. "Your voice is fatigued already. You have been through the first two acts twice this morning, and as for the 'Shadow Song,' if you have sung it once, you have sung it a dozen times."

"Well, I am not perfect in it now," answered Louisa.

"Where is the imperfection?"

"For one thing, I don't sing Velletri's *cadenza* properly."

"It is so awfully difficult."

"So much the better, if I overcome the difficulties. But it is not near so difficult as it appears. It goes rather high; but it lies nearly all of it in the best part of my voice, and the staccato passages which you think so wonderful I find quite easy. He really seems to have taken my measure, and he has fitted me beautifully. Only I don't do him justice at present, especially in this *cadenza* of the 'Shadow Song.'"

At this moment a knock was heard at the door. It was Flingsby, who had, for a very good reason, come modestly on foot.

"There's Mr. Flingsby," said Louisa. "Now I shan't be able to sing a note."

"Why not? When you come out you will have to sing before two thousand persons."

"I shall not mind that so much. I can't sing before Mr. Flingsby."

"How is 'Dinorah' getting on?" asked Flingsby, when he had gone through the usual forms and ceremonies. "I thought you were singing, when I came in."

"So I was," she answered, "but I have finished. I have been through the first and second act twice to-day."

"How I wish I had been here! But would you mind singing the air of the second act again? Nothing but that."

"I am so dreadfully tired, I hope you will excuse me," she said.

"Her voice shows great signs of fatigue," added Miss Rodgers, coming up to her assistance.

"In that case I of course can't press you, Miss Maynard," said Flingsby, thinking it best not to bore her, but devoutly wishing at the same time

that Miss Rodgers would mind her own business, or—an alternative which he would have been delighted to see her adopt—that she would “go and hang herself.”

At last the day fixed for the *début* arrived. The concert had taken place, and, in spite of Wolfenbüttel's sonata, was thoroughly successful, and left a profit of about three hundred pounds. Out of this sum Louisa had paid the cost of her mother's funeral, fifty pounds which she knew her mother had borrowed from Flingsby, and which was all Flingsby would acknowledge to have lent, and the balance of what she considered her debt to Julian.

She enclosed an order for the amount due to Julian in a rather formal letter, addressed to him at the house of Baron Haulingswell, in which she of course made no allusion to his return. His communication on that subject had now been about three weeks in the hands of young Wire, and seemed likely to remain there some time longer.

She felt grieved when she thought how long it

was since she had heard from Julian, and she half made up her mind that now, when she was coming out on the stage, she should hear from him no more.

In the meanwhile, it was satisfactory to think that she had paid all her debts, and that, whether her success in so important a part as "Dinorah" was great or not, she was about to find herself in a position in which she would at least be able to support herself.

Flingsby had sent Louisa a bouquet that morning, and about noon called with the programme, which was as follows:—

FIRST APPEARANCE OF
MADemoiselle LUIGIA MENOTTI.

This Evening will be performed MEYERBEER'S OPERA, in
 Three Acts, entitled

DINORAH.

DINORAH . . . MADemoiselle LUIGIA MENOTTI,
(Her first appearance on any stage).

CORENTINO . . . HERR WURZEL.

HOEL SIGNOR BOPPI.

Flingsby also brought a number of the "Morning

Mail," which contained a paragraph calling the attention of the public to the fact that Mademoiselle Luigia Menotti, "whose *début* had been looked forward to with great interest for some time past, and of whose success the most confident hopes were entertained," was to make her first appearance that evening.

"You see you are bound to succeed, Miss Maynard," said Flingsby. "We shall be contented with nothing less than a triumph of the first magnitude. And we shall have it, too, I am sure."

"You are very kind, indeed. I am afraid you expect too much," she answered.

"All you have to do is to sing as you sang yesterday at the rehearsal," said Flingsby.

Louisa could not prevent his hearing her at the rehearsals.

"If I could think of any fault to tell you of I should not conceal it from you at such a moment as this. You sang the music perfectly, and I can tell you that that is also Velletri's opinion, which is worth a little more than mine. . . . Miss Rodgers is not at home?"

"She has gone out to buy me a number of things. By-the-by, she won't let me put on any paint."

"No? Well, it doesn't matter much, perhaps; but the foot-lights will make you look very pale. I want to send you a wreath for the last act. You won't mind wearing it, will you?"

"How can you ask such a question? Certainly not."

"It ought to be a wreath of white roses, but if you are not going to rouge, you had better wear pink ones. They are not out of place at a wedding, are they?"

"I don't think roses are out of place anywhere," said Louisa.

"Very well. Then you will wear the roses I send; and if Turpin wants you to put on white ones don't you listen to him."

After a pause he added :—

"Do you know I think you will have a most wonderful success. Indeed, I feel so sure of it that I want to tell you something beforehand,

that you may not think your success has anything to do with what I am now going to say."

"If I *do* succeed," said Louisa, "I shall have to thank you for it. You first suggested that I should go upon the stage, and it was you who first introduced me to Mr. Turpin."

"I am so glad you think you have something to thank me for. You have a great deal to forgive me."

"Forgive you? I have nothing to forgive you, Mr. Flingsby."

"I have been very unlucky. Sometimes a man falls in love with a woman, and is fortunate enough to have an opportunity of risking his life for her. Instead of saving your life I almost killed you. It was a bad beginning."

"Do not speak of that. It was a terrible accident, but it was an accident, and could not be helped."

"Oh, but since then I have done so many things to displease you. How, I cannot tell, or I should have been able to avoid doing so at all.

But, as I said before, I have been very unlucky. Do you pardon everything?"

"I would," replied Louisa, "if I had anything to pardon."

"Do you believe that my aim has always been to obtain your regard, and, if possible, your affection?"

"You *have* my regard, Mr. Flingsby. I assure you that I am deeply sensible of your great kindness to me, and, above all, to my poor, dear mother."

"I sometimes fancied," continued Flingsby, "that your mother had a better opinion of me than I am afraid you entertain."

"My mother had the highest opinion of you. She told me so the last time I saw her—the last time I spoke to her, at least. She told me so," she added, with tears in her eyes, "on her death-bed."

"And have you no confidence whatever in her judgment? She knew with the instinct of a mother how devotedly I was attached to you; that there was nothing in the world I would not do to

ensure your happiness. You are nervous, Miss Maynard, you are timid—spare yourself then such an ordeal as you will have to go through this evening if you really appear on the stage. The stage is not the place for you. You will succeed, but at what a cost to yourself and to those who love you! My affection for you is without bounds, and I would strive to attain any position for your sake if you would listen to my entreaties and render me happy for ever by becoming my wife.”

“Good heavens! Mr. Flingsby. How I wish the words you have just spoken had never been uttered. It pains me to say so. But it would be dishonourable in me not to answer you plainly.”

“Let me only beg you not to answer me at all,” said Flingsby, hastily; “not now, that is to say.”

He said to himself, “after all she may fail, and she will come to me as to a place of refuge; or she may meet with such a success that she will feel really grateful to me for having had some share in helping her to it.”

The unelastic, pattering steps of Miss Rodgers were now heard on the stairs.

"Diabolical woman!" muttered Flingsby, though it was really just as well for him that his interview with Louisa should be brought to an end.

"If, in mercy, you consent to join your fate to mine, wear the wreath of pink roses to-night," he said; and giving her an eloquent shake of the hand he hurried past Miss Rodgers and went out of the house.

This was, perhaps, the fiftieth time that Flingsby had made a declaration of love, the fifth time that he had made a very serious declaration of love, and the first time that he had made an offer of marriage. On reflection, he felt a little bit astonished at being refused.

It was discouraging for a man who was not in the habit of contemplating even the possibility of getting married. Love, it is said, laughs at locksmiths; but the lock which the sort of love cultivated by Flingsby, above all, laughs at, is wedlock.

CHAPTER XIX.

PINK AND WHITE.

At Messrs. Wood, Wire, & Co.'s you can get everything that belongs to the Opera—the music, books of the words, opera-boxes, opera-glasses (on sale or hire), and even bouquets and wreaths for ladies purposing to attend the opera.

Miss Wire (aunt to Joseph) makes artificial flowers so beautifully, that they look like natural ones, and arranges natural ones so ingeniously that you would think they were artificial.

Miss Wire has a private floral establishment of her own; but anything you want in her line can be ordered just as well at the music shop, and all commands are executed with punctuality and precision.

Flingsby, though no botanist, was a good judge

of flowers in an operative point of view ; and he was determined that the wreath he destined for Louisa should be worthy of her. But he had not the measurement of her head, and he was obliged to ask Miss Wire to prepare several wreaths of pink roses, all of different sizes, but of a shape and fashion that he had already selected, and which pleased him exceedingly.

Miss Wire, however, though she executed all orders with punctuality and precision, had the weakness to consider herself an artist; and she made this a pretext for questioning her customers (*alias* her patrons, *alias* her clients) as to the particular use to which her bouquets, wreaths, and other floral devices were to be put, the circumstances under which they were to be worn, the complexion and colour of the hair of the proposed wearers, and so on. Miss Wire bothered Flingsby so much in reference to the destination of his pink wreaths, that at last he said to her, point-blank :

“The fact is, they are for Mademoiselle Menotti, the young lady who is coming out to-night in ‘Dinorah.’”

"Then she must wear a white wreath," said Miss Wire. "Madame Chanterelle buys her wreaths here, and she always wears a white one in the last act of 'Dinorah.'"

"Yes; but Mademoiselle Menotti wishes to wear a pink one. Let us look upon that point as settled, Miss Wire."

At this moment Mr. Joseph came in.

"Don't you agree with me, Joseph," said Miss Wire, "that a pink wreath is not at all the thing to wear in the last act of 'Dinorah?'"

"Not if 'Dinorah' has to wear it," said Joseph, rather feebly.

"Your opinion was not asked; at least not by me," observed Flingsby.

"I beg your pardon, sir," said Joseph. "You don't remember me, sir?" he added. "You wanted to buy some songs the other day of Miss Maynard's, and I could only find one. I've found some more now."

"Well, I will go and look at them directly. In the meanwhile, Miss Wire, about this wreath? I must have pink roses—natural roses, mind; and

as for the size, if you make it exactly the same size as Madame Chanterelle's, that will do."

"And where shall I send it?"

"To the theatre, addressed to Mademoiselle Menotti. Let it be there by eight o'clock."

"Very good, sir," said Miss Wire; and Flingsby went across the road with young Wire to the music-shop, to get some more of Louisa's songs.

"I suppose you know," said Flingsby, "that Miss Maynard is the young lady who is coming out to-night under the name of Menotti?"

"No, indeed I did not," answered Joseph, very much surprised.

He then said to himself that Flingsby was evidently very intimate with her, since it was he who ordered her wreath and even decided what colour it was to be.

"She can take up first with one man, then with another," he reflected: "yet if *I* ever addressed a word of civility to her, she always treated me like a worm. I'll let this fellow know all about her. He'll see, at all events, that *he* is not 'the only man she ever loved,' and all that sort of thing."

Joseph then began to tell Flingsby the story of the publication of Louisa's songs.

But Flingsby stopped him. Some weeks before he would have been glad to hear all about the transaction, even if it told a little against Louisa. But she was now absolute perfection in his eyes, and he would not allow the slightest aspersion to be cast upon her. He determined to reprove young Wire for making so free a use of her name, and reminded him that the gentleman whom he pretended had purchased her songs from some base motive, had gone immediately afterwards to China, and that he had been there ever since."

"Ah, but he's coming home," said Joseph.

"Is he? How did you know that?"

"I heard it."

He had in fact read it in Julian's letter. He wished Flingsby could read the letter also, but he could not very well give it to him with that view.

"However," he said to Flingsby, "as you know Miss Maynard, there has been a letter lying here for the last few days addressed to her,

and perhaps you wouldn't mind taking it to her? We didn't know her address."

The letter did not bear the Hong Kong postmark. It had been sent through the Foreign Office, and posted at Whitehall; and it never struck Flingsby for a moment that it came from Julian.

He ordered a complete set of the songs, and took the letter, which he left for Louisa at the theatre.

CHAPTER XX.

THE DÉBUT.

JULIAN, on his arrival in London, went straight to his uncle's, and found that Lord Saltern and Adelaide had both gone into the country. Haulingswell had also gone out of town, Irma accompanying him to see that he behaved himself.

Julian went home, asked for a newspaper that he might know what was going on in London, and finding the opera was open, and that a new singer was coming out that evening in the part of "Dinorah," determined to go and see what she was like.

Once seated in his stall (the performance had already begun) it struck him that she was very like a young lady whom he admired more than any one in the world.

She was very charming, more charming than ever.

He looked at her again, through an opera-glass. There could no longer be any doubt. The so-called Luigia Menotti was the Louisa Maynard of the songs, the Louise Ménard of the school at Richmond.

Sitting by Julian's side was young Cupper—the diplomatic Cupper, whose fate, hitherto, like his own, had been cast in distant and grotesque lands.

“Isn't she a nice girl?” asked Cupper. “Delicious, I consider her. Every man in London will be in love with her.”

Julian, not liking the idea, said to his neighbour by way of reply—

“Do you know anything of her?”

“No, not personally. But my brother does. You know my brother, Champagne Cupper as they call him?”

“You mean your brother who was in the army?”

“Yes, I was in the army too before I went into

diplomacy. They used to call me Claret Cupper, and him Champagne Cupper, to distinguish us."

"Why? Was he considered the liveliest?"

"No, I should think not," said Claret Cupper with a laugh. "He was considered the lushest, that was all. He used to take a great lot of champagne, and for the sake of calling me Claret Cupper they used to pretend that I took a great lot of claret—which I didn't."

"Well, what does your brother know about Mademoiselle Menotti?"

"Oh, nothing particular. She is the mistress of a man named Flingsby—a great snob; I wonder my brother knows him—that's all I've heard about her."

"Good God!" cried Julian, "what do you mean?"

"Hallo! you are not spoony on her, are you?"

Julian, who had at first turned very red, now grew very pale.

"Why, you don't mean to say you know her?" asked Cupper.

"I thought I did; that's all," Julian answered.

Cupper looked at him, as much as to say: "You seem a little bit cracked," but he did not speak a word, for the second act was now about to begin.

"Where is your brother to be seen?" asked Julian, who at that moment would not have listened to a solo by St. Cecilia.

As he could not hear Cupper's answer he repeated his question, adding: "These confounded chorus-singers make such a noise, I can't hear."

The chorus at an end, it was possible once more to talk with some chance of being heard.

"But you don't want to see my brother now?" said the so-called Claret Cupper, after he had given his address. "You will wait to hear the Shadow Song?"

Julian, however, went out, took a cab, and drove to Langham Place—where, of course, he couldn't find Cupper. When he returned, Louisa's great scene was at an end, and she was being called on to the stage.

"That's Flingsby," said a young man with long sleek black hair, and little grey eyes, whom Julian

fancied he had seen before here. "Isn't he applauding her, just!"

Instead of going at once to his own stall he sat down for a moment by the side of the young man who had called attention to Flingsby.

"Who is Mr. Flingsby?" he asked.

"Oh, he takes a great interest in the new singer," said the young man, who was no other than Wire; "that's all."

He had recognised Julian, and he wished to wound him through Flingsby as he had endeavoured to wound Flingsby through Julian.

"How delighted he must be!" continued Wire.

"Why?" asked Julian.

"Why? Well, I don't know; I should think you would if you were in his place. I'm sure I should. . . . Ah! now she's bowing to him. No wonder she's pleased."

Julian went round to the stage-door, and asked whether he could see Mademoiselle Menotti.

He was told that he could not. He wished to send his name in to her; but there was no one there to take a message.

He gave Thompson a sovereign, and asked him whether he would take a letter to Mademoiselle Menotti. Thompson replied, like a man, that he would.

Thereupon Julian, under the influence of what he had just heard, wrote a cruel, insulting, and, to Louisa, really unintelligible letter. She received it just after she had opened and read with the greatest delight the one that had been left for her at the stage-door, announcing Julian's return. He had now come back, then, and this was the way he greeted her—and all, as far as she could judge, because she had appeared that night on the stage.

She remembered what Flingsby had said as to the stage not being the place for her, and she said to herself that Flingsby was perhaps right.

Madame Velletri had already congratulated her; Mrs. FitzHenry, after sending her card in to Turpin, was now waiting to offer her felicitations; Turpin himself came to pay his compliments in a formal manner, reminding Louisa at the same time of what he had said at Sydenham of

the meaning of managerial compliments under such circumstances. But neither the sympathy of her friends, nor the loud applause of the public, who called her again and again before the curtain, could dispel the settled melancholy into which Julian's shameful letter had thrown her.

"Why should I love this man," she said to herself, "who treats me as if I were the vilest woman living? Would Flingsby, whom I do not love," she went on to reflect, "treat me in such a manner?" And she decided that he would not.

"Now, my dear, you will be late for the third act, if you don't mind," said Turpin.

"I hope you are not tired," said Velletri. "It is a fatiguing part. Do you see Flingsby in the stage-box?"

"Yes," said Louisa. And she remembered that he had not yet come behind, and that he was no doubt waiting to see whether she would put on the pink wreath or not.

Julian, with that love of self-torture which is so curious a feature in the passion of jealousy,

had deliberately gone to sit down by the side of young Wire, whom he had at length recognised.

"He bought a wreath of pink roses for her to-day," said Joseph, "in my aunt's shop. He *will* make her wear pink roses, though she ought to wear white."

Julian, who in spite of what he had heard, and in spite of what he himself had written, still did not quite believe in Louisa's intimacy with Flingsby, said to himself that if she came on wearing the pink wreath given to her by Flingsby he would take that as an omen, and decide against her, but that if she wore the white wreath, proper to the part, he at least would suspend his judgment.

As the moment for Dinorah's entry drew near, Flingsby and Julian looked with equal eagerness to the side of the stage, where she would have to remain for a minute or so before coming on; and Julian, without knowing what he was doing, stood up.

"She has got the pink roses on, do you see?" said the little brute Wire.

Julian wished to choke him, but refrained.

Just then Louisa, looking towards the stalls, thought she knew the person who was standing up in the front row. There could be no doubt about it—it was Julian. But how profoundly melancholy, how utterly miserable he looked. Her heart smote her when she thought of the hasty manner in which she had been on the point of giving herself up to Flingsby. She forgot the insulting letter. She only remembered that Julian looked wretched and broken-hearted; she asked Madame Velletri to give her the white wreath (“*à la bonne heure,*” said Madame Velletri, and gave it to her); and in the presence of Julian, who interpreted the omen, and of Flingsby, who understood the positive sign, substituted it for the pink one. Julian looked towards Flingsby’s box, and was satisfied when he saw the sole occupant of it frown, close his eyes as if in pain, and strike the cushion in front of him with his clenched fist.

During the third act, Haulingswell made his appearance in the stalls. Julian was delighted to see him, and talked about all sorts of things, but

only as a pigeon flies in circles away from its home. He soon came back to the one subject that really interested him, and dwelt upon it for the rest of the evening.

Julian was destined that night to be tormented. He was ashamed, after what he had written, to wait at the stage-door for Louisa to come out, as she hoped he would do; and when the opera was over, and the new singer had been recalled time after time to receive the applause of the public, he went with Haulingswell to the club, where he met both the Cuppers, and where he made the Captain tell him the cab story, and all the stories he knew against Louisa; after which he turned upon him and reproached him with calumniating her, and gave him to understand as civilly as he could that he didn't believe a word he had been saying.

Captain Cupper, as he got into his cab to go home, muttered with considerable energy that Julian "neversmanothworld."

CHAPTER XXI.

OPINIONS OF THE PRESS.

THE following was the highly musical article contributed by Mr. O'Fiddle to the *Morning Mail*, on the occasion of Louisa's first appearance :—

“That charming Opera, ‘Dinorah,’ the most melodious and, in many respects, the most poetical of Meyerbeer's works, was performed last night for the *début* of Mademoiselle Luigia Menotti, who replaced Madame Chanterelle in the part of the heroine.

“Mademoiselle Luigia Menotti's voice is a true *soprano sfogato*. The middle part is to a certain extent *velata*, but the upper notes are clear to limpidity, and at the same time bright, resonant and penetrating as the song of the nightingale.

Although Mademoiselle Menotti can sing easily from *C* below to *E* above the lines the most available part of her voice lies between the low and high *D* flat. Throughout these two octaves the voice is all of the same quality with the exception of the slight, almost imperceptible, defect already mentioned, which is incidental to Mademoiselle Menotti's extreme youth, and which an able professor will know how to remedy.

"In short, the new vocalist is the possessor of a magnificent and almost unrivalled organ, which she employs with rare skill and with a full knowledge of her art in all its difficulties and requirements. Her *portamento* is worthy of the great artists of a past generation, before Verdi had appeared to spoil the voice and style of all singers weak enough to addict themselves to his, perhaps, stimulating, but certainly pernicious music.

"If Mademoiselle Menotti's execution of *cantabile* passages leaves nothing to be desired (and in the expressive style she is certainly without an equal), what shall we say of her *bravura* singing?—except that nothing more brilliant, more

sparkling, more remarkable at once for spirit in the general rendering and for the utmost delicacy and finish in the presentation of the details, has ever been heard. Her *trillo* is perfectly well balanced, and she can sustain it for any reasonable time. Her *grupetti* are thrown off with exquisite lightness : and in the *cadenzas* written specially for her by that distinguished maestro, Signor Velletri, her happy manner of touching a few staccato notes at the top of the voice threw the audience last evening, into ecstasies of delight.

“Mademoiselle Menotti’s greatest success was achieved in the Shadow Song, her interpretation of which was especially remarkable for the sentiment and grace which characterised it. We must add that she displayed an *agilita* which the greatest adept in the science of vocal gymnastics, the most dexterous of mere *chanteuses à roulades*, the very lightest of ‘light sopranos,’ might have envied ; and that she gave the rapid *coda* with an *entrain* and a *brio*, which fairly took the audience by storm.

“There is something sympathetic—something

of what the Italians call *simpatico*, and the Germans *gemüthlich*—in Mademoiselle Menotti's manner, which at once predisposes the audience in her favour. And here we may remark that the great charm of her performance is its perfect naturalness. One scene may be more dramatic than another, and then Mademoiselle Menotti rises with the situation: thus she produces more effect in the last act where Dinorah recovers her reason, than in the first where she has only to sing a serenade to a goat, and to take part in a duet with a demented piper. But she is equally natural, equally truthful, throughout and we could not help saying to ourselves yesterday evening, 'This is not Luigia Menotti, this is Dinorah;' as we shall doubtless say when she appears in *Rigoletto*, 'This is Gilda;' and in the *Elixir of Love*, 'This is Adina.'

"Though the celebrated Grimm did not hesitate to draw a detailed personal comparison between Sophie Arnould and Madeleine Guimard, we have always held that to enter upon the question of personal beauty was beyond the province of the

dramatic and operatic critic. Nevertheless we may, by way of exception, be allowed to call attention to our *débutante's* charming physiognomy. She is about the middle height, with a figure perfectly formed, and as slim and flexible as a reed. Her features are almost too delicate for the stage, and as she uses no paint, her naturally pale complexion looks perhaps a shade too pale. But her dark hazel eyes light up her whole countenance. They are not too big, but they are full of expression, and the pupils being of immense size, look larger than they really are: "*Des yeux tout autour de la tête,*" like Henry Mürger's Mimi.

"Mademoiselle Menotti's really exquisite face is surrounded and set off by a mass of luxuriant light chestnut hair, which, when it is let loose (as in the scene of the torrent), hangs down to the fair owner's knees, and might be tied round her waist like a girdle.

"To return to the purely artistic question, the great charm of Mademoiselle Menotti's singing, as of her acting, is its perfect spontaneity. She

sings as the bird flies, as the river flows. It would seem that Luigia Menotti was born with the divine gift of song as other women are born with only the gift of speech."

After this one expected to read "Let us pray," but O'Fiddle contented himself with expressing his feeling of adoration for the operatic goddess in the critical form.

Indeed when he called upon Louisa the very morning that the notice appeared, instead of going down on his knees to her, he addressed her in the most business-like manner, asking her what opera they were going to "do" next, whether she didn't find the part of "Dinorah" rather high (he had said in print that she could sing "easily" up to E!), whether she was quite satisfied with Velletri's cadenzas, which, for his part, he didn't think very wonderful, and so on.

Louisa replied that he was satisfied and delighted with everything; with her charming part, with Velletri, with Velletri's cadenzas, with the audience, but, above all, with O'Fiddle's

eloquent, flattering, and superlatively kind notice in the *Morning Mail*.

O’Fiddle replied that he had simply written what he had felt to be the truth; and, in fact, it was only because he had been carried away by impulse that he had slightly exceeded it, as in one or two respects he evidently had done. For no artist is equally perfect in every style, and to every quality some sort of defect is attached. Yet, according to O’Fiddle, Louisa shone to the same advantage in expressive music and in the music of display; and he found her as remarkable for vivacity as for sentiment, for fire and impetuosity as for tenderness and grace. If she had appeared as *Norma* or *Lucrezia*, she would have played either part with an immense deal of talent; but O’Fiddle would have said that she had exhibited the highest tragic power, which she certainly did not possess. She could be “gay,” but not “grave” in the weighty sense of the word; and in proceeding from the “lively” to the “severe,” she could be vivacious, engaging, sentimental, tender, touching, truly pathetic, but not tragic.

Such as it was, however, Louisa was enchanted with O'Fiddle's panegyric. She was quite aware that he overpraised her. She knew, for instance, that she was far from having attained that mechanical perfection as a singer which he so confidently attributed to her; and his account of her personal appearance fairly made her laugh, especially that passage in which he accused her of having "eyes all round her head." On the other hand, she did not quite like O'Fiddle's mentioning the fact that some of her middle notes were "veiled"—so desirable is it, if you *will* eulogise, to eulogise absolutely and without reserve—while Miss Rodgers was quite ready to get furious on the point, and would have done so had not Louisa at once restrained her.

"My dear Miss Rodgers," she said, "if I were Sontag and Malibran, Pasta and Grisi, Bosio and Patti all in one, he could not say more in my favour than he has done. He has exhausted every form of praise that he could think of, and has represented me as an artist of genius, which I certainly am not."

"But he says your voice is veiled? What business has he to say that? And he calls it a defect, and hints that he could cure it."

"Well, my dear Miss Rodgers, so it is a defect. It is only singers who cannot get over it who pretend the contrary. Besides, he adds that it is almost imperceptible. . . ."

"I should think it *was* imperceptible."

"And that it can easily be remedied."

"Yes, if you take his advice."

"No, he says nothing at all about taking his advice. He says that a professor can tell me how to get rid of it, and I suppose Velletri can, if any one."

"Velletri will tell you that your voice is a little fatigued, that is all; O'Fiddle might have mentioned that, if he was obliged to look out for defects."

"Well, Miss Rodgers, he meant that, when he said that it was owing to my youth. He meant that I had been over-worked."

After that some visitors came in, and they all spoke of O'Fiddle's criticism as being such a

“capital notice” that at last Miss Rodgers was pacified; and on looking at it again, admitted that it was highly favourable, and indeed all that could be desired.

CHAPTER XXII.

LUIGIA MENOTTI.

ON the whole, the balance of evidence seemed to tell so much against Louisa that Julian decided not to go and see her. Besides, she had not answered his letter, and although decidedly too violent in tone, he thought the matter it chiefly referred to required at least an explanation. He had received Louisa's letter, enclosing the order for the money, and found it wonderfully cold; and he easily persuaded himself that it was intended as a preliminary to a final breach.

In the meanwhile he was guilty, night after night, of what he himself considered the cowardice of going to see Louisa at the theatre. Lord Saltern (who, however, took very good care to go

himself) remonstrated with him, Adelaide laughed at him : but all in vain. He found her charmingly sentimental as Lucia ; full of girlish grace, and in the serious scenes deeply pathetic, as Gilda ; bewitchingly coquettish as Adina, in the "Elixir of Love."

"How can anyone be as coquettish as she is in this piece, and yet not be a coquette?," he would say to himself. "And if she were only a coquette how delighted I should be to forgive her, and how I would move heaven and earth in order to become reconciled to her."

Sometimes, too, he thought that he would shut his eyes to all that she might have done, go to her, throw himself at her feet and ask her forgiveness on any terms. Once, when he had seen her in "Rigoletto," and twice after the "Elixir of Love," he was on the point of doing this ; but on his leaving the theatre, the direct influence of the charm ceased, and he said to himself that he had behaved unworthily in yielding to it even for a moment.

He often resolved never to go and see her

again ; but he went to see her every time she played, all the same.

On these occasions he would go round to the stage-door, muffled up in his over-coat, to see her come out and get into her carriage ; and he noticed that she was never once accompanied by Flingsby or any other man.

In fact Flingsby, having taken a two months' holiday, was passing it in avoiding his debts. That at least was the chief reason for which he had gone abroad, though had he remained in England, Louisa would never have allowed him to accompany her to or from the theatre. She had positively refused him, and he saw no reason for hoping that he could induce her to change her decision.

Louisa knew perfectly well that Julian came to see her every night that she played, and this was a great consolation to her. She wondered he did not write to her, but at the same time she could not bring herself to write to him. Several times she had seen him waiting at the stage-door, when he fancied that he was unobserved.

At last the end of the season drew near ; and she resolved if he did not write to her before the last performance, not to write, but to send a message to him to say that some one wished to see him behind the scenes.

The last night but one she was about to put the project into execution, when on looking at the stall which he usually occupied, she saw that it was empty. He was not in the theatre.

She had wished, above all, to tell him that she had accepted two excellent engagements ; one at Paris for the autumn, the other at St. Petersburg for the winter. But it was too late. She found out from Count Tchokimoff, through whose recommendation she had obtained the St. Petersburg engagement, that he had suddenly been appointed to the Embassy at Vienna, and that he had left London—without sending her one word of farewell !

CHAPTER XXIII.

AT VIENNA.

JULIAN had too much sense not to be delighted with Vienna, which is not only a very agreeable place in itself, but is, moreover, the most central city in Europe. Vienna, besides being in close proximity (in the railway sense of the word) to Dresden, the most charming of all the German capitals, is only half a day's journey from the ancient and picturesque Prague; half a day's journey from the frontiers of Italy; half a day's journey from Pesth; and half a day's journey from Cracow. Austria, in fact, has five distinct capitals; a German capital, a Bohemian capital, an Italian capital, a Hungarian capital, and a Polish capital.

Vienna stands in the midst, and within easy ac-

cess of four other capitals belonging to the same empire, each of which contains the monuments of a separate history, and in many respects of a separate civilisation. With the chief city of the Magyars, with two historical Slavonian cities, and with a grand and once glorious Italian city close at hand, there are no head-quarters comparable to Vienna for a traveller who cares something for history and ethnology, as well as for eating, drinking, and ordinary sight-seeing.

I had almost forgotten the Jews and gipsies. But Prague and Cracow have their little Jerusalems, in the shape of Jew-quarters—now happily free from the special imposts and restrictions by which, not many years ago, they were oppressed and stifled, but retaining all their old indestructible Jewish character, and, I am sorry to add, all their ancient ineradicable Jewish dirt. Hungary, too, is the richest country in the world in wild, and even partially civilised, specimens of the gipsy race.

Then there were the Houpinkoffs at Vienna, who were a study in themselves. Baron Houpinkoff was a Russian of the old school. It was his

proud boast that he was descended (through the Badenoffs) from Boris Godounoff, who at the end of the sixteenth century affixed the Russian peasant to the soil; and he detested the very idea of serf-emancipation, both as a political error and as a personal insult. He was not by any means the enemy of literature, as long as it kept clear of political questions; but he had a great hatred of journalism, and had no faith in any political news that did not proceed from an official source, nor any respect for political views that were not put forth by the government.

The Russian system, as it existed under the Emperor Nicholas, seemed to him the best, and certainly the strongest and most inassailable, that had ever been devised. For the government, in one branch or another, absorbed all the force and talent of the country, with the exception of a few malcontents, who had only to give one sign of disaffection to be exiled to Siberia. Those who supported the system were employed and rewarded. Those who were insane enough to dream of overturning it were sent away. How

could such a system as this be shaken? How, if no criticism was tolerated—and it was essential that this rule should be observed—could there even be a general understanding among the governed as to the existence in the system of certain weak points from which no human institutions are entirely free?

The reign of Alexander II. was, according to Baron Houpinkoff, the beginning of a thaw, which might end by a general melting away of the imperial power.

“We have certainly more freedom than we ever had before,” he would say. “Everybody is set free, everything is let loose, and we are perhaps on the high road, not to a rational liberty, as with you” (this was when he was talking to Julian), “but to a dissolution of the Russian state.”

Of course Houpinkoff was a bore. But though a bore in an active sense, he was interesting as a subject of study. Besides, he had a wife, who gave capital parties.

The Baroness Houpinkoff was a Georgian by birth, and in her youth had been distinguished by

all the warm glowing beauty of the Georgian race. Hers was the rich fruity style of loveliness. Her complexion had formerly exhibited something of the tender pink of the peach. It was now just tinged with the deep crimson of the nectarine; and already, when she was in delicate health and in rough temper, it could be seen that she would end by displaying the full yellow of the over-ripe apricot. She received regularly twice a week, and gave a ball about once a fortnight; while to Julian her house was always open. Lord Saltern had been a great friend of hers, and the fact of Julian being Lord Saltern's nephew was his best possible recommendation.

The Baroness Houpinkoff (*née* Tsenondahlani) was passionately fond of music, and it was she, it may be remembered, whose singing of the Russian song, "He loves me no more," had produced a certain impression on Lord Saltern in former days. Julian asked her to sing it, but finding that her voice was cracked, and remembering with a pang Louisa's clear crystalline tones, he felt very much inclined to ask her *not* to sing it,

but ultimately made a compromise, and resolved never to ask her to sing it again.

"The young man is not so polite as his uncle," the Baroness said to herself when she had finished the air. "He does not even thank me," which was certainly very rude of Julian, who, however, was thinking of another voice and of other scenes altogether.

The Baroness Houpinkoff was a little in the style of the Princess Boiaresco, who wanted anecdotes and tea in the middle of the night; and once, when she had called to take Julian, according to a previous arrangement, for a drive in the Prater, and he did not come at once in answer to her summons, she told the footman to show her the way to his apartments, and suddenly breaking in upon him, found him scribbling something upon a piece of paper, with a sheet of music before him.

"Ah!" she said. "That, you see, is the advantage of being an old woman! When I was Varvara Tsenondahliani and had sixteen years, I could not have done this. Now I go where it

suits me, and I find out a pleasant secret. I learn that old women must be kept waiting, for that young women may be written to. Were I away, I might be engraved and entombed, still no letter would come. But this young English girl you write to—you think of her a thousand miles off, and you forget the old woman who was to take you for a drive in the Prater, and who waits with her equipage at the door, and vainly sends her lacquey to call you to her.”

Julian was so confused he scarcely knew what to say.

“I beg your pardon a thousand times,” he began.

“No; take your hat,” she interrupted; “unless, indeed, your letter must really be sent off. If so, I pray you finish it.”

“It is no letter, I assure you,” he said.

“No letter! What is it then? You do not make your work for the chancery here, in your private room? Michael Ivanovitch would never allow that. Not one paper would he let go.”

“No, Baroness, it was nothing official.” I

cannot justify myself, and throw myself entirely on your mercy."

"Then I must know what your offence really was before I forgive it."

"My offence, Baroness, was that I kept you waiting."

"Of that I was already aware. But for what cause? I see music before you. You were not composing music, or rather, words for music?"

"I am ashamed to say that I was."

"Ah! and my horses were kept gnawing the bit that you might not stop the career of your Pegasus. Your punishment is clear. You must read the verses."

"The punishment is severe, for the verses are very bad. They are translated from the Roumanian. I dare say you know the original?"

"*Tu me diceai odate,*" read the Baroness from the sheet of music on the table. "Why, that is Rosetti's song that our Moldave acquaintance, the Princess Boiaresco, used to sing. And the lines have been set to music in England!"

Who, then, wrote the notes? Louisa Maynard!
I know her not."

Julian said that she was, or had been, a friend
of his.

"Has been!" exclaimed the Baroness. "Ah!
then the words are in reference to your mental
state; that makes them interesting. But you
are really the curiousest man I know. To write
love-songs to Louisa Maynards while I wait in an
equipage! Now read."

Julian with an air of complete indifference, read
the following verses:—

I.

"How sweetly you vowed that our love nought
should sever;

That hand, heart, and soul, you would always
be mine.

But that is all past, that is finished for ever;

'Tis the way of the world, dear, the fault is
not thine!

II.

"'Twas then with such fervour you cried: 'Oh,
my darling!

My chances of heaven for you I'd resign.'

You did not quite mean it, it's no use my
snarling :

'Tis the way of the age, dear, the fault is not
thine !

III.

" How oft did you swear my affection to cherish ;
That without it, in sadness, to death you
must pine.

Faith, constancy, love, all were destined to
perish,

But time destroys all things, the fault is .
not thine !

IV.

" I embraced you, and wished that your kiss were
eternal,

With the heavenly dew of your lips upon
mine !

But that heavenly dew changed to poison
infernial :

'Tis the nature of woman, the fault is not
thine !

V.

" The caresses and kisses I found so delightful,

The amorous protests that sounded so fine,
Are now for another—but stop, I grow spiteful :

'Tis the nature of woman, the fault is not
thine !

VI.

"Capricious and vain, from your heart love is
banished,
And gold is the god to whom now you in-
cline;
All notions of honour and virtue have vanished:
'Tis the way of the sex, dear, the fault is not
thine!

VII.

"But, false as thou art, in my arms I enfold
thee,
To me thou'rt an angel, to me thou'rt divine;
And my heart beats with rapture whene'er I
behold thee:
'Tis the nature of love, dear, the fault is not
mine!"

"Now," said the Baroness, "I should like to
subject you to an examen concerning these
verses."

"Oh, I am no poet," answered Julian.

"No, that I know. The more reason, that what
you mean you should say it plainly. Did this
young lady, did Miss Louisa Maynard ——"

"The verses are not addressed to Miss May-

nard, but to some friend of Rosetti's, or rather to a typical young lady."

"The original may be. But in traducing it you have thought, not on a typical young lady, nor a friend of Rosetti's, but on this Louisa Maynard, whose notes lie before you, and which you have carried here from London—you, who love not music! But I was saying, did your Louisa Maynard promise that she would give up her chances of heaven for you? Her chances could not have been great, one would think; and such as they were, she should not give them up. And you accuse her that she did not!"

"Blame Rosetti, Baroness, not me."

"No, I blame you; for you repeat his hot words in cool blood. Then she swore that without you she would pine to death, and you are angry because she yet lives! That is doubtless very unfeeling of her, the more so, as she has still her chances of heaven which she selfishly would not give up. But let us continue: You embraced her ——"

"I never did such a thing in my life, Baroness, upon my honour."

"Ah, but you say you did. I will pass over the details, but you say you kissed her, and that she kissed another, and that for that all women are bad. To please you she must give up her chances of heaven; then when you leave her she must pine to death; and before expiring she must not kiss another, or if she does all women are bad!"

Julian smiled.

"Then about the gold? Does she really pray before a golden veal? What is her occupation, if she has any?"

"She was first light soprano at our Italian Opera, but she is not in England now."

"Then I understand your being in Vienna. So she is a prima donna! And she refused to throw up her chances of heaven, and in place of that obtained great appointments at the opera. It was small; but you blame her somewhat too much. As for pining to death, it is quite unrational to look for that on the part of a prima donna with a

good engagement, who takes gold for her god—except of course in ‘*La Traviata*’ Nevertheless, she is an angel, and whatever she does, you love her all the same, and you would give your eyes could you see her—only then you would not see her. Is it not so—and that you are enraged against a heartless old woman because she turns your great passion into ridicule ? ”

“No, my dear Baroness ; now you are more unjust to me than ever. It is I who have to beg your forgiveness, for my dreadful impoliteness.”

“Speak of it no more. I see, my poor Julian, you are very sick. For the Prater it is now too late ; but come and dine with Michael Ivanovitch and myself. We shall be quite alone, and he shall give you a glass of the wine which Prince Schwarzenberg brought from Madeira, when he accompanied there Her Majesty the Empress. You are quite mean-spirited to-day.”

CHAPTER XXIV.

RE-APPEARANCE OF LUIGIA MENOTTI.

There was now a complete breach between Julian and Louisa. Julian knew by the theatrical and musical papers where Luigia Menotti was singing, and how brilliantly she had succeeded, first at Paris, and afterwards at St. Petersburg; and it is right to mention that he took in one musical journal for the express purpose of keeping himself acquainted with all her movements.

At last March arrived, and with it the beginning of the London season, and the opening of the opera-houses, and the re-engagement of Luigia Menotti (at a thousand a month, according to the "Musical World"), and a strong desire on the part of Julian to go to England.

The Baroness advised him to go also.

"You have raved concerning her so persistently and unfailingly," she said, "that were you to see her you could not rave more, and perchance you might rave less. You look upon her with the eye of imagination; go and view her with the eye of reality."

Julian had a right to a holiday some time in the year, and it was granted him at his request in the spring. He was in London the night of Mademoiselle Menotti's first appearance for the season; he saw her with the eye of reality, and found her more beautiful and graceful than ever.

In Paris, and above all in St. Petersburg, she had made many acquaintances in private society, and through them found herself largely introduced into society in London. Haulingswell told Julian that he had met her at several houses, and his capricious wife was so enchanted with her appearance, manners, and conversation, that she insisted upon being formally introduced to her, and actually attacked her husband for

not paying the charming vocalist sufficient attention.

She received several offers of marriage, from men who had fallen in love with her personally, and also from men who had become enamoured of her twelve thousand a year. Captain Cupper proposed to her one night at a ball immediately after supper, and went home forgetting whether he had been accepted or refused.

But the most ineligible offer of all came from Joseph Wire, who thought he was conferring a sort of honour on an opera-singer by proposing to marry her.

Joseph Wire's letter was sent back to him by Miss Rodgers, who intimated that there must be some mistake.

"Some mistake, is there?" said Joseph. "I'll soon show her whether there's any mistake or not. I should have thought that to marry a respectable man like me, was rather a good chance for an opera-singer. But no, she would rather have swells, like Flingsby, and like that young Hilton, going about after her, though

they'd as soon think of marrying our cook as of marrying *her*."

On the occasion of Mademoiselle Menotti's first appearance, or re-appearance, every place in the theatre was taken. The Haulingswells had a box. So had Lord Saltern and Adelaide—who maintained alternately that Louisa had a voice but could not sing, and that she could sing but had no voice.

In the stalls might have been observed Julian, Flingsby, the Cuppers, Gotnochinko, Tchokimoff, De la Rochenoire, Major Hodder, and other celebrities.

Young Wire was also in the stalls. Julian thought at one time that he heard him attempt a slight hiss, and advised him very strongly not to utter any such doubtful sound again.

In fact Joseph had come to the Opera for the express purpose of hissing Louisa—a project which, in the presence of so many of her personal friends and a public that was thoroughly devoted to her, was evidently impossible.

He was determined to injure her, but did not know how to set about it.

“He might calumniate her,” he thought, “in private, but then she would, in all probability, never hear of his calumnies. He might send her an anonymous letter, but that she could burn without any of her friends knowing that she had ever received it. He could not libel her in the press, for what had he to say against her that he could put into the form of an article or a letter, and that he could ask any editor to publish?”

He determined then, the morning after her thoroughly successful re-appearance, to attack her in a separate publication.

But who was to write the attack? Here at once was a difficulty.

“Do you remember the address of Wiggles, the comic-singer?” said Joseph, to one of his shopmen. “The man who brought us that bosh he wanted us to publish,—‘The Pretty Little Housemaid of Regency Park,’ I think it was called?”

“I think he’s dead, sir.”

"What a nuisance! I wanted him to do something for me."

"Then I'm sure, sir, I hope he's alive. But he was a frightful drinker. He was discharged from a Judge-and-Jury Club, and from two music-halls, for drunkenness. He used to play nothing but drunkards' parts at last because they were the only ones that suited him; and when I heard of him about a fortnight ago he had *delirium tremens* and was not expected to live."

"Well, I know you put his address down when he brought us the 'Pretty Little Housemaid.' Just give it to me."

It appeared that Wiggles lived in some court out of Drury Lane. Wire found him in a public-house, very ragged, very dirty, but not very drunk, for he was short of cash.

"I heard you were dead," said Joseph.

"No, sir; I wish I was," he answered.

"Why? You want money, I suppose? Here's five shillings for you."

Wiggles pocketed the money, and rang the bell for some gin.

"Now, just look here," said Joseph. "Before you get drunk I want you to do something for me."

"Very good, sir."

"You can write?"

"I should think so. That song of mine you wouldn't buy sold a hundred and fifty thousand copies. It's the best song of the day after 'Slap Bang, here we are again.' There are many excellent judges who prefer it to 'Polly Perkins.'"

"I dare say. But could you write a good libel?"

"That's just what I can do, sir. I am not a malicious man, sir, but when I am paid for a thing I like to do it properly; and I make bold to say that I can write a libel against any man, though I say it as shouldn't."

"Could you write a libel against a woman?"

"Well, sir, I don't see what's to hinder me. What's she been up to? Scratchin' her husband's eyes out, I suppose? That's their little game now."

"This one is not married. She is an actress; a singer at the Opera."

"An immoral character, I suppose, sir?"

"Oh, yes."

"Very good. What's her name?"

"Menotti."

"Menotti? Ah, it's a bad name! A bad name for rhymes. 'Dotty,' 'Lotty,'—what's the use of such rhymes as them? 'Sotty,'—we might do something with that. Does she drink?"

"No; but you can go on as if she did."

"Exactly. I only asked for—for the sake of saying something. Well, let's see. She's an opera-singer. Wasn't there an opera-singer once called Lotti?"

"Certainly there was, at the Royal Italian Opera. She came out the year before Lagrua, just after Penco left, I think."

"I've got it for you. Stop a bit!"

He drank a little gin.

Look here—

'Gye tried Penco, Lagrua, and Lotti,'

That's good!"

"Yes; as far as it goes."

"Well, stop a bit."

He drank some more gin.

" ' Gye tried Penco, Lagrua, and Lotti,
And though they all three went to pot, he
Thanked God that he'd not tried Manotti !'

That's worth five bob, anyhow."

"There's five shillings for it,—let me take it down—but you must do something better."

"Well, give me materials. I want to know something more about her."

"Here's an article about her that appeared last year in the *Morning Mail*."

Wiggles, after reading the article, said, as he laid the paper down—

"Ah! she's 'touching,' is she? She can be 'tender, touching, pathetic,' can she? I've got her! Just listen here. This is a regular hepi-gram; and I introduce Latin into it, as they do in the House of Commons, and we'll call it, 'Touch-me-not'—mind that."

Joseph wrote in his pocket-book, at Wiggles' dictation, the following lines, with "Touch-me-not," as a heading:—

"The 'noli me tangere' motto
Means (I said to a friend), 'Touch me not, oh !'
He replied, 'that though tongs he had got, he
Would much rather not touch Menotti.'"

"Well, what do you think of that?"

"I'll give you a crown for it; but it's too general. I want something that you can spot her by at once."

"Who's her friend?"

"Oh, she's several."

"So much the better."

"One is Flingsby; I dare say you know him by name."

"What! That 'orty swell, Flingsby? I know him!"

"Then there's a young snob named Hilton, an *attaché*."

"I'll *attaché* him!"

"And there's O'Fiddle, who puffs her in his paper. I suppose she pays him."

"Oh, safe!"

"Well, go on; take some more gin and scribble away. I can't wait here all day long."

"All right, governor!" exclaimed the poet.

"Now, look here," he said, after a short pause and a long drink. "Dedicate the last one to the *attaché*, and call him 'Unpaid *attaché*;' and dedicate this one to that beast O'Fiddle—he never mentioned my name once in his life, though I *have* written a good song now and then—and call him 'Paid *attaché*.' That means, of course, that he's bribed."

Wiggles recited, and Wire wrote as follows:—
"To Patrick O'Fiddle, Esq., paid *attaché*."

"Now, mind you, this is good. I've got a Jew-de-mo on her name. I have indeed.

'Praise or blame me at your ease,
Call me humble, call me haughty;
Call me whatsoe'er you please,
Only do not call me naughty.'

'Menotti, *me naughty*!' Do you see? That's worth something. Come, I won't give you that under half-a-quid."

"No; say seven and sixpence."

"Not a bit of it. That's a stinger, that is. If I was a young woman, and read such a thing as that against me, I'd go and drown myself."

"Well, take the ten shillings."

"Thank you. Now, I'll give you another one in the same style as that, only better; and you must stand ten bob for this one, too."

"Let's hear it first."

"Well, I'm a little personal here, because I want to touch up that fellow Flingsby a bit. Now, take your pencil and write it down; and you'll have to give me ten bob, mind. Now, don't go bustin' with laughter, but just listen quietly—

" 'To Robert Flingsby, Esq., swell, etc.'"

"*Et cetera* means anything, you know, and it always riles them. We'll call this, 'On a recent ovation.' Now go on."

Joseph wrote as follows:—

"There was a young singer, Menotti,
Whose fame was exceedingly spotty;
When by Flingsby recalled
She imploringly bawled,

"Oh, in public, please don't call me naughty.'"

"Oh, that's all very fine!" said Joseph. "That's the same joke over again. You don't suppose I'm going to pay you for that twice."

"Same joke! But the rhymes are new, ain't

they? 'Spotty' is new, ain't it? 'Whose fame was exceedingly spotty.' Why, that's as good a line as ever I wrote. Come, give me the half-quid."

"Not I, indeed."

"Then give me the lines back. She'd pay me ten bob herself to suppress them; ah! that she would."

"The joke is mine; I bought it, and I have a right to take it wherever I find it."

Wire at the same time made for the door.

"Would yer!" cried the poet. "Then I'll tell yer what you are."

And he vomited forth a torrent of abuse which, however, was quite lost upon young Wire, who was already out of hearing.

"They may well say, 'Vex not the poet's 'art,'" muttered Wiggles to himself when he had sat down once more in front of the gin-and-water "To think of his sucking my brains like that. Oh, the villain!"

Wire, in the meanwhile, had gone to a disreputable printer's to get the verses put in type

and struck off as soon as possible. He had the four stanzas printed just as he had taken them down. He made no alteration and no addition, except that he dedicated the triplet, "Gye tried Penco, Lagrua, and Lotti," &c., to Baron Hauling swell.

CHAPTER XXV.

A DINNER AT RICHMOND.

FLINGSBY, before his return to London, had contrived once more to get his bills renewed, and even to borrow a few hundred pounds to go on with.

He wished to re-commence his festive existence in a brilliant manner, and proposed that Turpin and himself should give a dinner at Richmond to a few friends, including the principal members of the company.

"Do you know that I never settled that bet about Chanterelle's engagement," he said. "I owe you six dozen of champagne, and I will pay you for that and as much more as you like to order, if you will stand the other wines and the dinner."

"Very well, old boy, that'll suit me," said

Turpin; "where shall it come off? and what other wine shall I order?"

"There are two things I can't understand," said Flingsby.

"Only two?" interrupted Turpin.

"Well, two to begin with. One is, how any one can drink sparkling Moselle when champagne is to be had; and the other, how any one can dine at Greenwich in preference to Richmond. Vinous acid sweetened to a syrup and scented like pomatum, that's what sparkling Moselle is."

"Women like it," said Turpin.

"Did women ever like what was good for them? Give me any sort of perfumery in spirits of wine, some vinegar, a bottle of soda water, and lots of that sickening *capillaire*, and I will mix you a bottle of sparkling Moselle not much more impure than the stuff you pay eighty-four shillings a dozen for."

"Well, I don't want you to drink any of it. You shall have champagne and as much of it as you like. Dry, sweet, or half-and-half."

"And dine at Richmond. My notion of a

perfect fool is a man who drinks sparkling Moselle at Greenwich, and, after taking twenty-four kinds of fish and no meat, stares out of the Star and Garter balcony into the mud and says, how jolly it is! The approach to Greenwich is disgusting, the approach to Richmond delightful; and the view from the Star and Garter is something to think of for ever afterwards."

"Then for you there are the associations, isn't that it?"

"I should prefer Richmond without them, I can tell you."

"Should you, really? Lor, what a lark it used to be when you went there with Coralie! How she used to laugh—poor girl, she doesn't laugh much now! I laughed too, I can tell you, to see a grown-up man going on as you did. She couldn't move a step without having you at her heels, couldn't look round for a second without your springing up to know what she wanted."

"I wish I could be such a fool again."

"By Jove, that would be a good subject for a

song. You write it and I will get Velletri to set it. 'I wish I were a fool again!' Every blessed fool would buy it, because no one knows what a blessed fool he really is all his life long."

It was settled that the dinner should take place that day week, and some forty or fifty persons of various classes and conditions were invited. The party, however, consisted, in the main, of Mr. Turpin's opera-company.

Louisa, the Velletris, Flingsby, and Turpin went down together (Turpin on the box). Miss Rodgers would not come.

Flingsby was as much in love with Louisa as ever, but as unsuccessful as ever in prosecuting his suit. He was as attentive to her as he could be, without absolutely pestering her by his attentions, and, on the whole, produced a more favourable impression upon her than usual during the journey from London to Richmond.

This, perhaps, was in some measure to be accounted for by the fineness of the weather, which had brought everyone who possessed an equipage, or legs of any kind, into the open air.

It was a cheerful day, and the western road was full of carriages. The Haulingswells had driven out to the Crystal Palace, Mrs. FitzHenry had driven away from the Crystal Palace, far into the country. Julian, Lord Saltern, and Adelaide, had driven to Kew, and continuing their excursion towards Richmond, had just reached Mrs. FitzHenry's old house where Adelaide had gone to school.

"What changes there have been since I was there," said Adelaide.

"Yes," answered Julian. "What places I have been to since then!"

"Which did you like best, Hong Kong or Vienna?"

"How pleased Haulingswell would be to hear you ask such a question as that! Of course Vienna is a thousand times the best city, but I think I was happiest when I was in China."

"Why?"

"I don't know. There were reasons, or fancies, I suppose. What a nice place Richmond is!" he continued. "It would be a good plan to dine

here. It is past seven already, and dinner was ordered at seven."

"We could easily get home by eight," said Lord Saltern.

"Why not dine at the Star and Garter, and get home by ten or eleven?"

"Yes, that would be much better," said Adelaide.

"Well, as you please; only let the dinner be good." And the benevolent uncle told the coachman to drive to the Star and Garter.

Dinner was ordered, and uncle, nephew, and niece went in the garden to take a stroll while it was being prepared. It was already getting dark, but it was a moonlight night, and the scene was romantic enough to make them forget the unreasonable length of time that the cook had already made them wait for their dinner. They had walked down to the end of the garden, and Adelaide and Lord Saltern were looking over the parapet into the river.

"What a weird looking figure that is," said Julian, pointing towards the upper part of the garden.

"Where?" said Adelaide. "Why, it is only a girl in a light-blue dress and a white bonnet. She looks queer in the moonlight, that is all."

"Do you hear her singing?"

"No, I hear her humming something or other, but I can't tell what it is. . . . Yes, I *do* hear her now. I ought to know that tune."

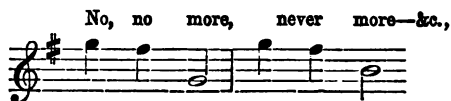
"And I ought to know that voice," said Julian to himself.

"It's the air that Louise, or Louisa, or Luigia, or whatever she is, used to sing when we were at school. But she never could sing it as well as that; not even now. She has not feeling enough."

"No," said Julian, mechanically.

"Where are you going?" asked Adelaide, hastily.

He did not answer, for the singer sang the refrain



in a much louder tone than the former part of the air; and Julian, recognising Louisa's voice,

and, as he approached her, Louisa's figure and Louisa's face, and being now separated from her by neither footlights nor fiddlers, and having her almost within his grasp, rushed towards her, and throwing his arms round her, embraced her with all the fervour of two years' longing.

"My darling, I have found you at last!" he said, and kissed her again and again.

"What a disgusting sight," said Adelaide aloud, yet to herself. And it was not a pleasing spectacle for her to behold.

"You cannot have looked for me very much, or your opera glass must be a very bad one, otherwise you would have discovered me before now, I think," said Louisa, half sadly, half joyfully.

"By Jove," said Flingsby, looking down at the happy couple from the door of the hotel. "I half think that fellow kissed her. But she'd better not play any tricks with me. I've behaved fairly and honourably to her."

So indeed he had, when he found that no other course was possible.

"Miss Maynard," said Flingsby, walking

towards her. "Do you know that dinner has been served some time? I didn't like to interrupt you while you were singing, but as you *have* been interrupted, I may as well tell you."

He scowled at Julian, and said to himself, as he looked at Louisa: "How red she is; he *must* have kissed her."

"You are not going to leave me," said Louisa to Julian.

"No," thought Julian, "Adelaide may say and do what she likes. It would be flying in the face of Providence, now, to quit Louisa."

He told Louisa he would stay.

"It may be twelve months, perhaps, before we meet again," she continued. "Let me introduce you to Mr. Flingsby. Mr. Flingsby, will you ask Mr. Hilton to dine with us?"

Flingsby muttered something about being "very happy," in a most unhappy tone; and Louisa, who had gained a little confidence since she had been on the stage, gave Julian her arm and took him in to dinner.

Flingsby thought for one moment of placing

himself on the other side of Louisa and endeavouring to outvie the new comer in amiability. But feeling certain that he should fail in the attempt, he deliberately turned sulky, and took his seat far away on the opposite side of the table.

The conversation was already at its height, and all sorts of subjects were being discussed by all sorts of people.

CHAPTER XXVI.

TABLE-TALK.

"THE worst of getting into the habit of falling in love," said a fat man, who was old enough to know better, "is, that it really does become a habit at last. The heart can be exercised like any other organ, and a fatal facility of action may be acquired for it."

"For my part, I have no pity for persons who fall in love," said an affected young man of two or three and twenty.

"Do you blame them, then?"

"No, I envy them. They are in a state of most delightful excitement."

"Say insanity, rather," said Turpin.

"But it is only temporary insanity—that is the worst of it," sighed the fat man.

"I would put them all into lunatic asylums—men and women too," said the youthful cynic.

"If you put them there together," suggested Flingsby, "they would be much obliged to you."

"Talking of excitement," said Turpin, "look at our friend Cupper."

"I won't hear anything against Cupper," answered Flingsby. "He reminds me of two of the most celebrated men of antiquity. He is as bald as Julius Cæsar, and as drunken as Alexander the Great."

"Falling in love, is like being half-drowned in a butt of malmsey," sighed the fat man.

"The struggling lover has only to catch at a matrimonial straw," remarked the youthful cynic, "and he is soon saved."

"Yes, marriage is still the best cure for love," said Sir Charles Winkworth.

"I know of nothing more commonplace than jokes against the conjugal state!" exclaimed

Flingsby. "When will there be an end to these antiquated sarcasms?"

"When there is an end to marriage," replied the youthful cynic.

"It must be a delightful thing to have a theatre," said Sir Charles Winkworth. "If I had not so much money I would take one next week."

"If I had no money at all, I would take one to-morrow morning," said Flingsby.

"You think you would make your fortune, do you?" asked the manager.

"No; but I should be sure not to lose it; and I should live at the rate of five thousand a-year."

"And at the end of the season?"

"At the end of the season, I might have a surplus, or I might be in debt; but in the meanwhile I should have lived at the rate of five thousand a-year."

"I am afraid you do not take a very high view of the artistic nature of our calling," said the manager.

"Turpin, for shame!" expostulated Flingsby.
"Do not add hypocrisy to your other vices."

"But, Sophie, my child," said the other of a dancer who had just made her *début*, "listen to what Monsieur O'Fiddle is saying. *Il est journaliste. Il faut soigner ces gens là. N'est ce pas, monsieur?*" she continued, in a confidential tone to Blountley, whose collars seemed to connect him rather with the world of fashion than with that of letters.

"*Oui, madame, j'en suis,*" answered Blountley, who was a confirmed newspaper hack. "*Je demande a être soigné, mademoiselle,*" he added, with a look of entreaty to Mademoiselle Sophie.

"Ah, sir, that is not well," said the dancer-mother; "from your brilliant wit, sir, it is easy to see that you are one of the columns of the English press."

"She is spoiling you with her flattery," remarked Turpin, who was sitting opposite.

"No," replied Blountley, "it's not me, it's her flattery, that she spoils. She makes it too thick."

"She doesn't know how to mix it," said Flingsby. "It's a great art."

"What, then, is the real difference between virtue and vice."

"The chief difference is, that vice sacrifices everything to the present, and virtue everything to the future."

"So that, in the absence of a future, vice would be right and virtue wrong."

"No, I don't mean that."

"Well, before you explain to me what you do mean, pass the wine. That Burgundy, by your side, is highly intelligible."

"There may be quite as much expression in the figure as in the face."

"That is an opinion no young man ever entertained."

"One of the first six girls I ever fell in love with," said Leonard Spoonbill, a poet, author of an impossible plot for a ballet, and other absurdities, "was a hunchback, but she had the countenance of an angel."

"A cherub has no back at all; and there is no clear understanding as to what an angel's figure should be," said Blountley. "How often we say of a woman that she has the face of an angel, but that she has the figure of one never."

"You have no business here," said Julian to Louisa.

"Nonsense, I am a singer," she replied.

"I don't know what I am."

"I could tell you, but you would not like it. Be reasonable," Louisa continued. "There is no harm in my singing, and there is no harm in my coming here."

"I don't care whether there is any harm in it or not," said Julian. "I don't care about anything in the world, except being near you."

"If you would not mind moving a little for the present, I should be glad."

"How heartless you are."

"No; but your chair is on my dress, and you are so close to me, that I cannot raise my left arm. I want to eat some fowl."

"Some fowl?"

"Yes. I suppose you have no appetite."

"No."

"Pass me the bread."

"No one," said Blountley, continuing the face-and-figure discussion, "*avec la seule exception de Mademoiselle Sophie, qui a la plus belle taille du monde*, had ever a finer figure or a sweeter face than Carlotta Grisi, with whom we were all in love. Suppose we could have cut Carlotta Grisi in two at the neck, which would have been the true Carlotta—the face or the figure, the head or the body?"

"*Qu'est ce qu'il nous chante?*" cried Sophie's mamma, who had taken four or five glasses of champagne. "*C'est de la taille de Sophie, qu'il s'agit?*"

"I don't think she is any relation of the little girl's at all," said Sir Charles Winkworth, attracted by the dancer-mother's shrill voice. "She is what Adrienne calls '*une mère d'occasion*.'"

"Yes," said Flingsby; "the dancers, and a few of the singers, too, I believe, hire them at a place in Long Acre, with their broughams. A one-horse brougham costs three guineas a-week, or, with a mother thrown in, four guineas. There is a reduction on taking an aunt, whose duties are supposed to be less onerous."

"I should like to be Mademoiselle Sophie's mother, without charge," said Leonard Spoonbill. "She is a dear child, and I would love her and cherish her."

"*Ah ça, est ce qu'on s'occupe toujours de moi ?*" cried Mademoiselle Sophie. "*Sophie, Sophie ! Je n'entends que cela.*"

Flingsby replied that it was difficult to think of anyone else while she was present; which compliment Mademoiselle Sophie said was *très fade*, as Flingsby in his impertinence meant it to be.

"How oldsh . . . champagne?" stammered Cupper.

"How old is this champagne, or how old is champagne generally?" said Blountley. "If you

mean champagne generally, we are told that it was known at the time of the invasion of Gaul by the Franks, and that a Frankish chief found the effervescing drink so much to his taste that he got drunk on it and remained drunk for three days, during which time his army was dispersed."

"Is that to be found in the collection of improbable stories, called history?" asked Flingsby.

"I have not yet looked for it there," answered Blountley.

"Oh! women are better than men, are they?" said Chanterelle to Medora. I am not so sure of that. Did you ever know a woman who liked the society of other women?"

"No; they have too much sense," answered Medora.

"Do you mean that the other women, or the women who don't like their society, have too much sense?" asked Blountley.

"I don't understand you," said Medora.
"You are talking nonsense."

"The fact is," Flingsby broke in, from the other side of the table, "that pretty women—and nearly all women think themselves pretty—know very well that they have not near so much chance of being appreciated by their own sex as by ours."

"You think we are dreadfully vain," said Medora.

"I know you are," said Flingsby, "and I am glad of it. If you were not, I would start a society for the encouragement of female vanity to-morrow."

"You can safely leave that task to society as already constituted," said Blountley.

"Don't like la Menotti!", exclaimed Chanterelle, in answer to a remark from Turpin. "Why, didn't you see how I was applauding her the other night?"

"I, for one, saw exactly how you were applauding her," said Flingsby. "There is an applause for show, and an applause for sound. Your applause was strikingly visible, but it was not quite audible to the naked ear."

"Do you mean to say you couldn't hear it—when you were in the same box?"

"If I had had an ear-trumpet I might have been more fortunate."

"There are not two only, but three kinds of applause," said Blountley. "The public applaud spontaneously, by way of giving expression to their feelings. This may be described, in your language, Flingsby, as a mixture of show and sound. The professional clacqueurs go in for sound alone, and, without seeming to exert themselves, know how to make a tremendous noise. As for you, Madame Medora, when you clap your hands in honour of another singer, or when another singer claps her hands in honour of you, you seem to be hitting very hard, but you have no serious intentions. It is like fighting with the gloves on."

"It is fighting with the gloves on," said Flingsby. "The professional clacqueurs make a point of taking theirs off."

"You would gladly give ten, twenty thousand

pounds, would you not, in order to escape from a disagreeable wife?" asked Leonard Spoonbill of Sir Charles Winkworth.

"Make it fifty," said Sir Charles.

"Then why marry a woman for the sake of a fortune, if you would give a fortune to get rid of her afterwards?"

"You argue," objected Blountley, "as though all women with money were necessarily disagreeable. But there are rich angels and plenty of poor devils among the thousands of women now waiting to be married."

"Louisa!" said Julian, with something like a sigh.

"I am listening," answered Louisa.

"Has a tenth, a hundredth, a thousandth part of what is said against you any foundation whatever?"

"Write to the editor of the *Family Herald*; don't put such questions to me."

"Forgive me, but I am distracted when I hear these silly tales."

"You cannot expect me to pity you."

"You might say one word."

"Not a syllable—yes, I will say one thing. Don't take any more wine, please don't. Look at Captain Cupper. What a fool he is making of himself."

"He was born so, my darling."

"You talk too much like a man who has just returned from China, you really do."

"'Ock or 'ermitage?" inquired a waiter who was going round with wine.

"'Ockorermitage?" repeated Julian to himself.

. . . "Oh! I see. Give me some hermitage."

"What a quantity of wine you are drinking," said Louisa.

"That's because I like it so much," answered Julian.

"Are you a slave to your inclinations then?"

"No; only to my passions. Otherwise I should not be here talking to you."

"You are getting wild."

"I *am* wild. Wild with you and with your conduct."

"I think you had better join your party. Miss Luscombe will be waiting for you."

"Miss Luscombe may wait."

"No ; that would be a pity."

"You have had enough of me, then ? "

"Too much. You forget yourself."

"I wish I could get killed for you."

"It would do me no good, and it might hurt you."

"You are heartless ! "

"I have often been told so, and I looked upon it as a compliment."

"Well, be heartless ; but even then I am as good a man as that snob, Flingsby. I am not so rich, perhaps ; but I would not mind ruining myself for you, and he would."

"You will be sorry for this to-morrow. Your own conscience will punish you for it."

"Conscience ! Do you speak of conscience, Miss Maynard ? "

"I will not speak to you of it again, nor of anything else."

She got up from the table and walked towards

the door leading to the garden. Julian followed her. Flingsby followed her with his eyes.

"Look at Flingsby," said Chanterelle to Medora. "I thought he had broken with Menotti altogether?"

"*Il fait sa tête*," answered Medora. "He is sulky, and he keeps himself at a distance in the hope that she will approach him. I understand his manœuvres. He used to do that with me when he knew that I was fond of him. He is a selfish wretch."

"But is Menotti fond of him?"

"Not she. You have not noticed her. She would give her soul for that young man."

"I would not mind making a small sacrifice for him myself. But why does she walk away from him?"

"That he may walk after her."

"But look at Flingsby now," continued Medora. "He is becoming quite a sight. He really amuses me."

The rat of jealousy was gnawing at his heart, and he looked at Louisa and Julian (neither of

whom saw him) as if he would have poisoned them with his stare. He rolled up his napkin, tied it in a knot, pulled at it as if he wished to tear it to pieces, as he would have been only too delighted to tear Julian.

"Flingsby!" Medora called out.

No answer.

"Flingsby!" she repeated.

He looked round.

"Are you doing conjuring tricks with that napkin?"

He did not speak.

"There is some sort of *escamotage* going on, is there not?" she continued, enjoying his torture, and thinking of the studied indifference with which he had often treated her.

"I must go out and have a cigar," said Flingsby to no one in particular.

"*On demande du feu!*" muttered Chanterelle, who hated Flingsby on account of the trouble he had taken to get her replaced by Louisa.

"I know a place where I should like you to have some," he thought, as, with a scowl at

the French "light soprano," he walked towards the garden.

"Why, every one's going away and dinner isn't half over!" cried Turpin. (The dessert had just been put upon the table.) "I ordered the maraschino in on purpose for Flingsby. But he does not seem to care about it. Menotti needn't have gone, at all events," he added. "I'm hanged if that young Stick-in-the-mud hasn't taken her away. I wish Flingsby hadn't asked him in."

The singers, Louisa's rivals, were indignant at her impertinence and ill-breeding in presuming to leave the table before the banquet was at an end.

"Mr. Flingsby," said Julian, when he had duly reflected that they could neither break one another's heads nor cut one another's throats, "we have both done wrong. We ought not to have left the table. I will return if you will."

"I shall not return there at all," said Flingsby. "I shall go to London. Miss Maynard, good-by!"

"I will do the same," said Julian. "I have behaved very rudely to you, Miss Maynard," he added. "Will you forgive me, and may I call upon you to-morrow?"

"I shall be at home," she replied.

"Has my party gone?" asked Julian of a waiter.

"Long and long ago," he replied.

"Yes, you were with a party!" said Louisa.

"Certainly. I was with my uncle and Adelaide," he replied.

"He must care for me, after all," Louisa reflected. She went back in very good spirits, and sat with the Velletris until they were ready to drive her home. She cared nothing for the incessant badinage that was now directed against her; and when she was asked by Turpin what she had "been and done" with the two best-looking men in the room, replied that one had killed the other in a duel for her sake, and that the survivor, at her suggestion, had drowned himself in the Thames.

CHAPTER XXVII.

ACTION FOR LIBEL.

WHEN Julian reached home Lord Saltern and Adelaide were already in bed. A letter was lying on his table. He thought it was from his uncle, but on tearing the envelope open found that it contained the infamous verses composed by Wriggles, and ordered and paid for by young Wire.

"What miscreant," he said to himself, "could have written and printed these detestable, cowardly insults? And if they should have sent a copy to Louisa herself! Why, the poor girl would never recover from the shock."

He went out, took a cab, and made the man drive as fast as possible to 123, Bloomsbury Street, where he had promised to call the next day.

"Is Miss Rodgers at home?" he asked.

"Yes," said the servant; "she is sitting up for Miss Maynard."

"I want to see her directly. It is very important. Say Mr. Hilton is here."

Julian went upstairs.

"I have received a most horrible paper, in which all sorts of atrocious things are hinted at and said about Mademoiselle Menotti—about Miss Maynard. For heaven's sake do not let it reach her."

"I have seen it and burnt it," said Miss Rodgers. "I open all Louisa's letters for her at her own request, and it's a good thing I do. Every morning the post brings one or more love-letters to her, sometimes half-a-dozen, but I never show them to her."

"What a delightful thing she never sees them," thought Julian. "Miss Rodgers is a good sort of woman, really."

"As for those shameful verses, in which your name, and Mr. Flingsby's name, and Baron Haulingswell's, and Mr. O'Fiddle's names, are

made to figure, they are disgusting, no doubt ; but to me they are pitiable."

"And why does Haulingswell's name appear in them?"

"Why, Mr. Hilton, excuse my saying so, but you would be nearly as bad as the writer of these infamous stanzas, if you believed that there was any reason why one name should appear in them more than another. My darling Louisa has never given anything but *discouragement* to Mr. Flingsby; and if she had ever cared for him she might have married him, for he has proposed to her more than once to my certain knowledge."

Julian felt inclined to embrace Miss Rodgers. But he restrained himself.

"Thank you, Miss Rodgers, a thousand times, for your kindness," he said.

"What kindness?" Miss Rodgers asked herself. "I have shown him none."

Julian, however, thanked her again as he wished her good-by, and begged her to tell Louisa that he should certainly call the next day.

On examining the wretched lines, he came to

the conclusion that some jealous singer must have written them. But who? Not Chanterelle, not Medora—Louisa's rivals?

"No," he reflected; "they would not stoop to such meanness; nor could they have written the lines if they had wished. They do not understand English, and this wretch, whoever it may be, does."

"Still, they are the work of some jealous, malicious singer," he said to himself as he went to sleep; and the next morning he got up early and hurried to Messrs. Wood and Wire's shop, to ask whether Mr. Joseph could put him on the track of the scoundrel.

He went into such a violent passion, however, and called out to Joseph in such a furious voice, "Look here what I have received!" that the cowardly wretch, thinking he was about to be struck, fell on his knees and at once confessed—not to all, but to about a tenth part of the share he had had in the work."

He swore he had not written the verses, and he swore he had not printed them—both which state-

ments were literally true; and he pretended that they had come into his hands by chance, and that he had sent one of them to Mr. Hilton "just for a lark."

"And to Miss Maynard?" roared Julian.

Joseph had not imagined that the news of his having sent a copy of the scurrilous publication to Louisa could possibly have reached him. He remained kneeling, and hung his head down without saying a word.

"Have you a pair of scissors in your pocket?" asked Julian, calmly.

"Good Gaud, no! What are yer going to do with me?"

"Have you a penknife?"

"Oh, good Gaud, good Gaud! He's agoin' to murder me."

"Well, I don't know what to do with you. Have you a needle and thread?"

"Oh, Gaud Almighty! he's agoin' to sew my mouth up."

"That would be the best thing to do, and it's perhaps lucky for you, you filthy little reptile, that

you haven't a needle and thread. If you had had a penknife, or a pair of scissors, I really should have cut your ears off."

"Oh, my Gaud, my Gaud!" whined Joseph.

"I can't think of caning you any more than I should of caning a toad."

"Oh, Gaud bless yer, sir, Gaud bless yer."

"But don't let me ever see you again, or I shall tread on you."

"Thank yer, sir!" groaned the little wretch.

Julian took him by the left ear, gave it a good shake as if he were ringing a hand-bell rather violently, and left him squealing.

In the afternoon, Flingsby, who had also been served with a copy of the libel, and who had heard through Turpin that young Wire was responsible for it, called in his turn at the music-shop.

"Halloo! Help! Murder!" cried Joseph, leaping over the counter, and preparing, in case of pursuit, to hide himself underneath.

The respectable members of the firm, however,

made their appearance from up-stairs ; and two shopmen armed, one with a deceased opera, the other with an unsaleable oratorio, rushed in from the back.

“What do yer mean? What are yer up to?” shouted young Wire, now that he felt himself protected.

“I was going to thrash this young man,” said Flingsby, “for telling lies, and for uttering infamous calumnies.”

“Thank you, that’s been tried before!” cried young Wire. “You remember that bully who called half-an-hour ago, papa?”

“If you have the misfortune to be his father, sir, I dare say I shall not take you by surprise when I assure you that he is a liar and a slanderer. I am sorry I had not the opportunity of beating him before you arrived ; but, under the circumstances, the will must stand for the deed.”

No one said anything ; and Flingsby walked out of the shop shaking his stick at young Wire, who made a face at him as soon as his back was turned.

Flingsby lighted a cigar, walked to the nearest railway station, and took the first train that went anywhere. He could not go home to sleep, and he could not go to Broad Street the next morning, for, owing to the failure of some negotiations in connection with an overdue bill, he knew that bailiffs would be waiting for him at both places.

A few days afterwards, Wolfenbüttel happened to go into Wood and Wire's to buy some music. He had forgotten young Wire's existence, but young Wire had not forgotten his, and bolted into the back shop directly he saw him. Thus Flingsby's visit, if it had no other effect, at least helped to give the young man a fright.

Haulingswell, when he heard this story, declared that he also would take an opportunity of showing himself at Messrs. Wood and Wire's. Unfortunately, he did not keep his word; or Joseph might have been tempted to emigrate.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A DESPERATE RESOLUTION.

BEFORE going to Louisa's, Julian called upon his uncle, to see whether it would be possible to propitiate him by asking his consent beforehand.

Adelaide, guessing what he came for, and knowing from his conduct the night before in the garden that the game was already lost, went out of the room almost as soon as Julian entered, and without speaking to him.

"I dare say you know what I have come for, uncle," Julian began.

"I know how far your intrigue has gone. Adelaide has told me."

"Yes ; but please don't call it by that name?"

"Well, call it what you please. Your conduct last night was simply disgraceful."

"The circumstances were exceptional, and I apologise most humbly for my rudeness, such as it was."

"Well; and you are determined to marry a singer?"

"It is not because she is a singer that I wish to marry Miss Maynard."

"But the fact of her being one does not deter you?"

"Plenty of men in as good a position as myself have married singers."

"It would be a nice thing, certainly, at one of the great European capitals, for you to be employed at the Embassy, and your wife at the Opera."

"But she would not sing after her marriage."

"You cannot look upon her vocation as a particularly honourable one, if on marrying you would desire her to quit it."

"There are many reasons for which I should not like my wife to appear on the stage."

"I can understand them all."

"But the fact of her having appeared on the stage, where she held, and where she now holds,

a most distinguished position, does not in any way unfit her for becoming my wife."

"I suppose you are the best judge as to what amount of respect you owe to yourself. But it is certain that an actress exhibits herself for money: you can't get over that."

"That is quite true of some actresses, and, above all, of some dancers; but of singers it is not true at all. Some of the greatest singers have been wanting in all beauty except beauty of voice. The public does not go to the opera to see them, but to hear them sing."

"At all events, there is a very general feeling on the subject,—call it prejudice or whatever you please,—and if you rise in the Service you might not find it pleasant to be the husband of a lady whose position in life had at one time depended upon the caprice of an audience. The wife of an ambassador or minister should not only be presentable, but her presence should be desirable everywhere. Now there are some Courts where the sovereign would certainly not feel pleased at having to associate, almost on equal

terms, with an *ex-prima donna*, to whom he had paid compliments behind the scenes, and presented perhaps with a brooch or a bracelet. What an agreeable thing for an empress or a queen to have to receive, on the footing of an ambassadress, a singer who, formerly, had only been too delighted with the condescension when Her Majesty has been graciously pleased to summon her to the royal box ! ”

“ But I shall never be an ambassador, uncle.”

“ Not if you are prepared to sacrifice everything for a pretty face ; otherwise, you have very good prospects.”

“ And even if I were an ambassador at this moment,—ambassadors marry singers. In fact, they are rather celebrated for it. I have heard you speak of the Count d’Entraigues, who came over to England and settled here.”

“ Settled here ? He was murdered here. Well, he married the celebrated Madame Saint Huberti, that’s true, and he was a diplomatist. He sold to the English government what he pretended were the secret articles of the treaty

of Tilsit, and, according to M. Thiers, did not earn his money."

"Did you know Count Rossi?"

"Count Rossi? Certainly. He was at Vienna when I was there. I know what you are going to say. He was an ambassador, and he married Mademoiselle Sontag. Poor Sontag! What an agitated life hers was, and what a terrible death!"

"Was Count Rossi excused for marrying Sontag?"

"Excused? He was applauded and envied. The Court has not yet been heard of, nor the private family either, that Sontag would not have adorned."

Julian blessed the memory of Henrietta Sontag, who, by her virtuous example, had done so much to redeem the character of the by no means spotless class to which she belonged. "Louisa is like Sontag," he said to himself. "Why cannot my uncle see that?"

"Count Pepoli," continued Julian, "has he ever been an ambassador? I want to keep to the diplomatic body, you see; otherwise I could

mention dozens of noblemen who have taken their wives from the opera."

"You mean the husband of Mademoiselle Alboni. He has been employed on diplomatic missions, I believe."

"Shall I go on? I can, if you wish it."

"I know you can; but let us keep to the case immediately under consideration, without bringing forward seemingly parallel cases, which, in fact, are not parallel ones at all. You wish to make a fool of yourself, and you propose to convince me that other men have made fools of themselves before you. You need not take the trouble. Human folly is vast and without limits. If I can keep you from throwing yourself into this boundless sea, I shall be glad to do so—that is all. But you seem very obstinate."

"I think I must take a tremendous header, uncle. I would much rather do so with your approbation than not."

As Lord Saltern made no answer, Julian wished him good morning, jumped into a cab, and drove to Louisa's. He rushed upstairs to

the drawing-room, and when the servant followed him and assured him that Mademoiselle Menotti was not ready to receive visitors, replied, in the solemn words of Wolfenbüttel, "I can wait."

It was a pity; for if Louisa had been in the drawing-room he would have settled his little business in two minutes. I believe that in duels judicious seconds make a point of not getting to the ground too soon, that their principals may have time to reflect what fools they are about to make of themselves, and also because waiting makes men nervous. For this latter reason the medical officers of insurance companies will often put an applicant of doubtful sanitary character into a room by himself, and not go in to see how he is until he begins to walk up and down.

Julian soon began to walk up and down. He had quite made up his mind to ask Louisa to be his wife; and, when he was with his uncle, when he knocked at Louisa's door,—above all, when he ran up-stairs in the hope of seeing her at once, he fancied she would accept him, and scarcely asked himself whether there was any likelihood of her

refusing him. Now the possibility of such a calamity befalling him presented itself to him more and more vividly every moment. He looked round the room. There was the piano he had chosen for her, and which hitherto he had easily persuaded himself she had kept in remembrance of him. She might do that, however, he said to himself, and still be unwilling to marry him,—especially after the unjustifiable suspicions that he had manifested in respect to her blameless and admirable conduct. He was staring at the piano when Louisa came in.

“How are you this morning? You seem lost in thought,” she said. “What is the matter with the piano?”

“I was thinking that it was an old acquaintance—that was all,” answered Julian.

“I don’t look upon it as an acquaintance,” Louisa replied. “I look upon it as a dear friend. It has been a great source of consolation to me; and as for use, oh! it has been of immense service. It is a delightful piano. It has all sorts of good qualities.”

"Which you, who understand it, can bring out, but which it would never reveal to me."

"It would if you studied it, and paid enough attention to it."

"Like a woman, I suppose," he said, gravely.

"I don't know," said Louisa, not at all gravely.

"You can tell better than I can which would be the easiest to play upon. The piano is very difficult if you once go beyond mere trifling."

"Tell me really why you kept the piano."

"Why, the other furniture was mine,—at least, I had gone through the operation of paying for it. The piano was and is yours. But, without reference to its ownership, I really should have been most distressed if I had had to part with it. It has been my companion through so many different scenes, and it seems as if I had confided everything to it. If it could only speak——"

"It *does* speak, when you play upon it."

"If I had been performing in public, and you were going to write about it in a newspaper, you might say something of that kind, and I should

be very much obliged to you. But, between ourselves——”

“It is foolish, you think?”

“No, I won’t say that; but it is unnecessary. You imagine singers and public performers are vain because they are fond of applause. But they live by applause. As for private compliments, they care less for them than any other people. You should reserve your pretty speeches for amateurs who can get nothing else.”

“Well, you won’t make *me* vain, at all events.”

“As I said before, it is not necessary.”

Julian was now no nearer making his declaration than when he first came into the room. Louisa certainly gave him no encouragement, and he was beginning to fear that he should at last have to depart abruptly from the light comedy style to which she seemed so anxious to confine him, and make a plain, passionate appeal, which would, perhaps, be met by a downright refusal. He did not think he could afford to run the risk; but in the meanwhile he was getting foolish—men will, under such circum-

stances, and women too, if the men remain sensible — and was losing his conversational powers altogether. He returned to the piano, out of which he had hitherto made very little, and to which he ought not to have gone back.

“A piano, without any one to play it,” he said, “is of no use.”

“That is true of all other musical instruments,” replied Louisa, “except, perhaps, the clarionet, which might be used as a weapon of offence.”

Julian did not like this tone, and now felt more than ever like a fool. Just then the clock of a neighbouring church began to strike twelve.

“When that clock has done striking,” he said to himself, “I will ask her in three words to marry me, and become a Garibaldian patriot or a Chinese rebel if she refuses.”

At two minutes past twelve, however, he was still hesitating how to begin. Louisa, feeling also rather awkward, had gone to the mantel-piece, and was pretending to arrange some flowers in a vase.

"Louisa," said Julian, at last, "I want to ask you a question, or rather, I want to ask you a favour—the greatest favour possible."

"It is granted beforehand, as you well know," said Louisa; "but on condition that you do not ask it as a favour. You know that I have nothing to refuse you."

He took hold of both her hands.

"Leave my hands alone," she said. "This is not Oxford Street."

"It is the only street in London that I care for, and yours are the only hands."

"In London?"

"No, in all the world. But you are trying to avoid my question. For the first time in your life you are behaving like a coquette."

"I have often played the part of *Adina* in 'L'Elisir.'"

"But I don't want to play the part of *Nemorino*."

"Oh, you do not?"

"That is to say, not *Nemorino's* part in the first act, when you make a fool of him."

"At the beginning of the second, then?"

"No, that's worse. . . . At the end of the second."

Louisa became serious again.

"Louisa, I have known you under several names since I first saw you—that is to say, since I first fell in love with you; to me it was one and the same thing."

"You could not fall in love with me without seeing me, certainly. And what do you mean by *first* falling in love with me?"

"I fell in love with you first at Richmond, when you were Louise Ménard, and when I got you into trouble. I fell in love with you again, when I met you as Louisa Maynard in the music-shop."

"And got me out of trouble?"

Julian drew her towards him.

"No; now you must try to think you *are* in Oxford Street," she said, "or I shall take my hands away."

"You shall never take them away again," he replied.

"Never?"

"No, not as long as we are both of us alive. You know when I fell in love with you the third time?"

"Was it quite a fresh attack?"

"It was the same attack continued, or renewed. You were then Luigia Menotti. Now can you guess my question?"

"I cannot undertake to supply you with answer and question too."

"Will you change your name once more?"

"Certainly, if you wish it. I will take the name of Miss Miffin—the lady, you remember, who threw you the penny—if that will give you the slightest pleasure."

"Will you take mine?"

"Yes."

"Will you be my wife?"

She threw her arms round his neck, and half a minute afterwards whispered to him, "What a diplomatist to hesitate about putting such a question as that!"

CHAPTER XXIX.

FINALE.

JULIAN'S colleagues, on hearing that he was about to get married without his uncle's consent, and that his intended wife was a singer, went about saying that he was ruined, and so on. He will perhaps have to leave the diplomatic service, but that will not ruin him. It is thought that he will sink into some Danubian consulate, which will give him seven or eight hundred a year, and the opportunity of studying a portion of the great Eastern question on the spot. In that case Miss Rodgers will accompany Louisa in the capacity of companion and friend; and it will not be astonishing if she writes a book, showing up the morals of Eastern Europe, and entitled the "Englishwoman on the Danube."

Louisa had saved six thousand pounds, and Julian had inherited six thousand. Six and six make twelve, and the interest of twelve thousand pounds at four per cent. is nearly five hundred a year; which, added to the official salary, will enable the young couple to get on comfortably enough. As long as Julian is in love with Louisa, it does not much matter to him where he lives. Marriage, it is true, is the grave of love; but the grave may be covered with flowers, and *Non omnis moriar* may be a fitting inscription for the tombstone.

Julian, moreover, will not pass the remainder of his life in a state of spooney sentimentality on the banks of the Danube. He must ultimately inherit a considerable amount of property from his uncle, and if he chose, could at once borrow money on his expectations. This he will no doubt do, instead of waiting like a fool for his uncle to die. He can then return to England, and endeavour to get into Parliament as a Liberal Conservative, through his uncle's interest, which would scarcely be refused to him; though some

of his friends think he would have a better chance of being returned if he were to show his independence by coming forward simply on his own account as a Conservative Liberal.

Hunted into a corner by Amos and other usurers, Flingsby said to himself one day, immediately after Louisa's marriage, "After all, she had not blue eyes, or I would never have given her up. As it is," he continued to reflect, "I am in such a cursed scrape that I must now either blow my brains out or marry Priscilla Moxom. Well, of two evils a man generally chooses the worst. But to get through the inevitable preliminaries. It's easy enough to make love to a woman when you can't marry her—but to make love to a woman when you *must* marry her, whether you like or not, and when you decidedly don't like it—some hypocrites may be able to do it, but it's not in my line."

With a little kind assistance, however, from Priscilla (she was always an obliging girl), he got through the difficulty, and Miss Moxom became Mrs. Flingsby.

May the yoke be light to him for her sake, or he will throw it off !

After all, it serves her right. *Elle l'a voulu.* And if reformed rakes really, as some women are not ashamed to maintain, make the best husbands, Flingsby—when he has quite lost his youth, and has ruined his health and his temper, as well as his morals—will be a model spouse.

But “reformed rake” is only another expression for “exhausted voluptuary ;” and Flingsby is still strong, and being of a most elastic temperament, will soon recover from the depression consequent upon the marriage of Louisa to Julian, and of himself to Priscilla Moxom.

Captain Cupper is now major in the army. He is perfectly unattached, and having been recommended by his doctor to abandon champagne, intoxicates himself for the most part on dry sherry.

Turpin has “cut” Italian opera, and says he will never have a musical theatre again. “Why

not?" he exclaimed, when he was asked the reason; "I'll tell you why. Because if the tenor has a pain in his little finger he won't sing. If the *prima donna's* big toe hurts her *she* won't sing. Actors are not so delicate as singers, and you can work them harder." In the meanwhile, as Turpin could get no theatre for the performance of the regular and irregular drama to suit him, he has taken a music-hall, in which Amos is supposed to have a large pecuniary interest, and where for half-a-crown, including one shilling entrance-money, you may have a sausage, a glass of hot brandy-and-water, and more music than you would care to listen to.

"Without sausages, music is but a hollow sound," said Turpin the other day to a friend who met him inside the Escorial—the name he has given to his music-hall, probably, because it at once suggests a gridiron. "This is not one of your low music-halls," he added. "I do *Lucrechia* and *Don Jovani*, besides Offenbach. 'You pay your money, and you have your selection,' as old Stick-in-the-mud says."

"Who is old Stick-in-the-mud?"

"Why, O'Fiddle, to be sure. They'll all have to come here," he continued; "Patty, Lucre, Marryo, and the whole lot of 'em. That's what I call progress. It's no good fighting against the future. Time is on our side. I can afford to give them more money than Gye and Mapleson, and money must win the day. I'll have Patty here in less than two years, and Strakosch shall play the accompaniments."

Wolfenbüttel tried to get the directorship of the music at the Escorial; which, he said, might be made a most useful place for elevating the masses, and educating them æsthetically. He could not, however, agree with Turpin about terms, and now speaks freely of him as a materialist, a sensualist, and "te foe of all vot is grand ant nople." Nevertheless, Turpin has his good points; and if he should again become manager of an opera, after the return of Julian and his wife to London, there will be at least one lady who will subscribe for a box on the grand tier.

Turpin was very anxious that Velletri should conduct his orchestra. He declined, however; and he has now returned to Italy, and, what is worse, has taken his amiable wife with him.

Young Wire has started in business for himself. He continues to admire the fair sex, and not to be admired in return. No man has better personal reasons for believing in the virtue of women than Joseph Wire, who, nevertheless, remains incredulous on the subject. He is getting very rich, and it is sad to think how many nice-looking girls would willingly accept his big, red hand, if he would only offer it.

Mrs. Fitz Henry continues to make false starts, and in the end to lose every race in which she engages. When she heard that Julian and Louisa were likely to go to the regions of the Danube, she asked the former whether he thought an English boarding-house would be likely to succeed at Jassy, or Bucharest, or Belgrade. Julian replied in the negative. But although Mrs. Fitz

Henry is constantly breaking down, she always falls on her feet, and perhaps at last will find a secure footing.

Haulingswell has been promoted, and is now first secretary. On receiving the appointment he could not help wishing that his fate had made him a "cabinet-courier" instead, that he might now and then have escaped from Irma, who, in general society, it is only fair to add, is as charming as ever. For the present, however, Haulingswell and his wife are on perfectly good terms, and eternal peace has been proclaimed between them.

Julian having been indirectly the cause of their grand quarrel on the subject of Louisa and her songs, made it his special duty to bring about a reconciliation; and the peaceful relations now existing will no doubt continue until some new pretext for a quarrel arises, when of course all the old grievances will be revived. In the meanwhile the Baroness has been to see Louisa several times

since her marriage, and has heard her sing "Rappelle toi" and the Roumanian love-song, and is perfectly enchanted with her, and calls her "my linnet," my "sweet nightingale," and so on.

Adelaide is sulky, Lord Saltern is sulkier, and, moreover, has got the gout. He has gone to Vichy—a very good place for every one this hot weather.

THE END.



